THE

CASTLE OF ROVIEGO;

OR,

RETRIBUTION.

A Romance,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By MARY PICKAR.

" Remember, that the ways of Heaven,
Tho' dark, are just: that oft some guardian power
Attends unseen, to save the innocent.

" Ye good distressed!
Ye noble few! who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up a while,
And what your bounded view, which only saw
A little part, deem'd evil, is no more,
The storms of *wintry Time* will quickly pass,
And one unbounded *Spring* encircle all."

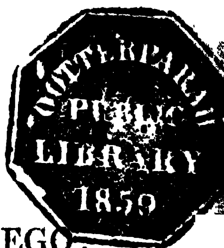
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CHAPTER I.

"FIVE years had elapsed since I had visited my native shore. With what tender recollection I once more beheld it! As I advanced towards the paternal mansion, my impatience redoubled. Anticipation already placed me in my dear father's arms; and as his heart beat responsive to my own, I felt his tears wet my cheek, while his faltering accents blessed his son and his Zamira!

"I hastened on—the cheerful peasantry that were wont to range about my father's domain,

had disappeared. I looked fearfully round, for doubt had entered my mind. Two or three stragglers passed at a distance: of them I wished to inquire, but durst not, and I hurried breathless on, till I reached the outward gate.

"I knocked, and listened—no answer was returned: again I raised my trembling hand, but all was silent. No domestic's joy announced the prodigal's return!—no kind parent received his penitent child, and prepared for him the fatted calf! My heart sunk—a faintness came over me, and in a fit of grief and despair I threw myself on the ground.

"Let me pass over this painful period of my life—the first sensation of real sorrow that had yet assailed me! My grief and loud complaints drew an old man towards me, who was standing no great way off: his earnest inquiries recalled my senses. Concealing my name, and endeavouring to suppress my emotion, I asked tidings of the inhabitants of the castle. His replies were daggers—my respectable father had long since paid the debt of nature; my sister fallen a sacrifice to grief, on her husband

being

being slain in battle: the mansion was falling to decay, and the sound of festive mirth was exchanged to sullen silence.—Mournfully quitting this scene of my early pleasures, my youthful hopes, I regained the beach, and finding a vessel bound to Cadiz, on the point of weighing anchor, embarked. Tempestuous winds bore me to the Spanish shore, and thence to a foreign land, now my only home, and that of all the universe contained of value for me!

"In vain I tried to meet my wife with smiles: my faultering accents and altered appearance too forcibly explained my distress of mind. Zamira, misconstruing the nature of my dejection, accused herself as the cause of our father's just resentment: but on the painful truth being told, she burst into tears, and retiring to her chamber, secluded herself during many days from all society, spending the heavy hours in imploring his sainted spirits to pardon and protect us.

"Melancholy now subdued me quite, and I became regardless of the blessings kind Heaven had bestowed. My wife and mother exerted

erted all their influence to draw me from this dejected state which threatened my health and life, but in vain. Zamira, who secretly reproached herself for my fault, pined daily; and when almost too late to save this idol of my affection, I perceived with horror the irreparable loss I was on the point of sustaining.

"Sorrow of a different kind now seized my soul; I shuddered at beholding myself on the point of being bereft of all that could render life desirable, and left alone in a world which had no delight for me. Every faculty was now exerted to console my innocent wife: the existence of that strong affection which had made me indifferent to every other earthly object, but which my long-continued grief and melancholy had given her reason to believe for ever dead, was again called forth, and every means which love could invent, alternately tried to charm her from her sorrow.

"My redoubled attention and earnest solicitude succeeded, and I once more beheld the rose return to her cheek, and the smile of joy irradiate her countenance. The days of mourning we had passed seemed to render our present

sent happiness the more refined! My wife was the admiration of all who knew her: there was not an unfortunate being in the colony who had not tasted the sweets of sympathy or relief from her; and their blessings attending her steps, seemed indeed, to draw down the immediate regard of Providence on our mansion. One thing only infused the seeds of bitterness in our full cup of bliss: no child had been granted to our earnest wishes; and after long pining for this addition to our felicity, at length we mutually silenced our regrets, and bestowed on Sebastian's little ones, that share of tenderness we should have given our own.

" Zamira one morning entering my apartment with sparkling eye and glowing cheek, excited my surprise: a few minutes informed me of my happiness.

' I feared to communicate false hopes,' said she, tenderly taking my hand; ' but Heaven at length has heard our prayers!'

" From this moment our joy knew no alloy, and our days passed in making preparation for the expected stranger. The period arrived in

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which my beloved wife gave birth to my Angela! my only blessing!—she, sweet lady, your generous pity has saved from dishonour and from death!

" Our little cherub grew apace, and her infantine smiles, and innocent prattle doubly rewarded the cares and fatigues of maternal anxiety. Three years of uninterrupted calm succeeded. My new relation of father had infused new ideas into my mind: I thought already of returning to Europe, and claiming my patrimony, devolved to a distant relative by my supposed death, and my sister dying without issue. Already did ambition spread her lures, as fancy represented my little girl restored to the rank her father had abandoned, shining at a court that had cruelly trampled on her mother's family, and demanding admiration, as the tribute due to her beauty, and her virtues.—Alas! how blind is man! how rashly he quits the beaten path that leads to happiness, to follow a vain shadow, beckoning him to ruin! The length of time which had elapsed since my quitting Europe, made me hope I could return

unobserved

unobserved, and introduce my wife and mother to the rank they were entitled to hold. One motive only deterred me from executing this project: the relative to whom my estates had devolved, and who was nearly of my own age, was an orphan, and my father's ward; consequently much of our youth was spent together. The thoughtless years of childhood generally passed without much reflection; but as time steals on, events which then made little impression, return forcibly to the mind at a later period. My memory furnished some recollections that debased him in my esteem: selfishness and pride were his ruling passions; for these he would, in early youth, have sacrificed every object; and these are faults which years do not correct. His own possessions were but small, comparatively. Would he relinquish mine in pure generosity, and because informed their tenure was illegal? I was conscious, that to prove my identity in a court of justice, would be the means of having my estates confiscated, and probably expose me to persecution,

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my marriage with the daughter of a Moor rendering me amenable to the laws.

"My dear wife and mother, who had trodden the slippery paths of greatness, content with their condition, endeavoured to divert my thoughts from this visionary scheme, and fix us to the peaceful spot on which we dwelled, undisturbed by envy or ambition.

"The jewels Muley Hamet had committed to my care at various times, the fatal evening of our last interview I had concealed about my person: the valuable casket he had given me a few hours before his death, I had brought away; and as I contemplated this hoarded wealth, my restless mind was seized with an irresistible wish to purchase an estate in Europe, and remove my family thither.

"Sebastian, who had always served me with integrity and skill, might on the present occasion have taken the voyage, and found me such a place as would have suited my wishes. This was also urged by my wife and mother, seeing my determination fixed; but, encouraging the thought of inquiring into my lost property, whether my cousin still lived, and if not,

not, who enjoyed estates that ought to have been mine, I veiled my real intentions under the plea of seeking such an abode as would insure us the advantage of elegant society, joined to all the charms of rural life; and of disposing of some of the jewels, which could never be used either by my wife or daughter, being too costly for any private individual. These reasons did not satisfy them, though, rather than oppose my inclination, they appeared to acquiesce; and loaded with the benedictions and anxious prayers of my family, I embarked.

"Sebastian this time attended me, contrary to my intention; but their entreaties prevailed, and I was obliged to accept his services.

"Spain I had quitted for ever, for I could have no desire to become an inhabitant of a country which was the grave of all Zamira's kindred; yet many tender recollections rose in my mind at sight of the blue land appearing in the distance: I felt a wish once more to tread the scenes of my former haunts; and observing my companion look with an anxious eye towards its shores, I expressed my feelings,

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and finding them seconded by his, communicated our intention to the captain, and instead of pursuing our way to Italy with him, engaged his boat to convey us to Cadiz.

We next looked at the house we had inhabited, and hired mules to carry our baggage, and a guide to attend us across the country. Sebastian, guessing my intention of visiting the abode of my deceased friend, assured me he could attend me through all the defiles of the mountains, if I had any thought of exploring any part out of our direct road to the frontiers. The second day we left our mules and guide at a little inn on the road, and set out at day-break for our expedition. After walking some hours, we came within sight of Sebastian's former habitation, who sighing as he looked towards it, said:

'Perhaps to-night a truss of straw there may be a luxury!' and instantly turned into a different direction. He had heard my description of the place which had been the retreat of my wife's respected parent, and without difficulty explored its secret windings. We were provided with torches, and the means

of procuring a light: entering, we examined the different divisions which formerly composed the abode of Muley. Every step proved that this place, once the asylum of beauty and of worth, had been rifled. The velvet curtains which had separated the apartments, were torn away; all the articles of value or splendour, which had been secreted there, were removed; and nought remained but the extensive caves themselves, atchieved by a suffering race for the protection of their kindred: even the massy door, clamped with iron, which barred the entrance of an enemy, was broken from its hinges, and cast upon the earth. An awful sensation seized me, as I leaned over the tomb of my departed friend.

'My father!' said I, kneeling down, 'thou art witness that the vow I made thee, has been faithfully observed.'

"The state of the earth convinced me his body had remained untouched by the lawless hands which had plundered his retreat; and giving a sigh to the memory of this brave and generous man, I suffered Sebastian to lead me

 from

from the cavern. The shades of evening were now falling, and ere we reached the cabin, our early abode, midnight had spread her sable veil over every object. We were received by the poor shepherd with hospitality; a bed of fresh leaves was offered with good will, and gratefully accepted. Here we learned that a desperate gang of banditti had for a long while infested the country for many miles round, and had found means, for a considerable time, to evade the searching eye of justice, by secreting themselves among the caverns; 'of which,' added our host, 'they say our mountains are full; but they were at last taken, and their hiding places destroyed.' This account explained the desolated state in which we found a place, once the asylum of fallen grandeur.

"At day-break we resumed our walk, arrived at our inn, mounted our mules, and continued our journey, uninterrupted by any event worth noticing. Having crossed the Pyrenées, and entered Navarre, we pursued our way through the south of France, for I was quite uncertain where to fix my place of residence.

After some deliberation, my inclination prompted me to settle in France: it was half my native country, being that in which my mother first drew breath, and whence my family originally came. I travelled through its provinces with pleasure, and pleased with the urbanity of its inhabitants, determined to make it our abode; and with this intention I endeavoured to find such a situation as would be perfectly agreeable to the dear partners of my affections.

"A small estate in the vicinity of Avignon appeared eligible in all respects, possessing both the advantage of rural retirement, and elegant society. This I purchased, and after spending some days at my new habiation, in making the various alterations that appeared proper for the accommodation of my family, on the wings of love I once more embarked for the New World, to bring my treasures thence, and transport them to a more genial soil. I pass over the dangers of the main, and my venturing at a season when nought, it is supposed, but the hope of gain would tempt man to brave the threatening tempest, and fre-

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quent shipwreck. Some months of absence had made a great alteration in my child: my wife, too, whose countenance beamed with affection, appeared even more lovely to my partial gaze; and with rapture I clasped them to my breast, and promised myself years of felicity. We parted with regret from our interesting and friendly neighbours, and after an indifferent voyage, landed at Bourdeaux, whence, after resting from our fatigue, we pursued our way to our terrestrial paradise.

CHAP. II.

"THE beauty of the surrounding prospect, the elegance of the grounds and mansion, joined to the urbanity and politeness of the neighbouring families, and the honest zeal of the peasantry, charmed my wife and mother; our little girl, delighted with the village children, became their idol in her turn, and they, her playmates and companions. Time rolled away in uninterrupted peace and enjoyment; our former misfortunes were forgotten, and we looked forward to years of happiness.

" Our child improved both in person and mind—every acomplishment which can grace the female character, was profusely given, and with ease acquired by our darling. Chance informed me that my cousin, the possessor of my estates, was married to a lady of austere manners, and haughty deportment, that they had a family,

and that he was himself esteemed a worthy man, deserving a better fate than passing his life with a woman whose pride and overbearing spirit had shut his gates against all mankind. My heart reproached me with the illiberal judgment I had passed upon him; and recollecting his own fortune was but small, and the sight of me might throw him into difficulties, I resolved to with-hold my claim, blessing my own domestic lot, as I compared it with his.

"This calm was somewhat disturbed by Sebastian's telling me, one evening, that he had seen the same person who had before caused us so much alarm at Cadiz, talking to one of the villagers.—His description was very exact: but it recalled no one to mind whom I had reason to fear, and I wished to impute to chance an event which alarmed him, and notwithstanding my endeavours to forget it, insensibly dwelled on my mind. Some weeks elapsed, and I begun to resume my usual cheerfulness, when returning through the village rather later than was my custom, with my child, who had spent the day with a neighbouring family, I cast my eyes towards a stranger,

stranger, who hastily passed me, and beheld my mortal foe! I stood speechless with terror, and shuddered as if a serpent crossed my path. Taking Angela in my arms, I ran forward, and never stopped till I reached the house:—I called my wife aloud with agony, and not daring to advance, lest my fears should be confirmed, threw myself into a chair, and burst into tears. My daughter's screams soon brought my mother to us—I called aloud on my wife!

"Cadija asked, in terror, 'if any accident had befallen her.—Let us hasten to her, she is walking in the chesnut grove, I left her not a quarter of an hour since.' Thither I ran, still calling on her name: Alas! my fears were too prophetic — Zamira heard not my voice—a villain had torn her from me. My next inquiry was for Sebastian; he too was absent—the horror of my mind increased—and catching up my sword I rushed out, and ran frantic through the village, inquiring of every one, the rout the ruffians had taken. Several of the honest peasants instantly armed and joined me, waiting my commands: they divided and took

different ways, while I, unconscious what I did, returned to the grove once more, to seek my unfortunate wife.

"A few minutes restored my recollection, and I took the road leading from the walk. Some miles from my house, stood a poor hut, inhabited by a wood-cutter, who often assisted in my grounds; here I stopped to inquire whether Sebastian had been seen, and heard that he had passed by about two hours before. For the first time, I suspected the most faithful of servants of treachery; all his former fidelity fled from my mind; and running with precipitation from the spot, I cursed the hour I had first seen the villain, who had for ever undone me.

"The night had now fallen; little aware of the distance that separated me from my home, I still hastened on, till overcome by fatigue and violence of my emotions, I sunk down at the foot of a tree. On recovering my senses, the first object that attracted my regard, was my injured domestic, who kneeling by me was supporting me in his arms, while he chafed my temples, and used every method in his

power

power to recover me. Groaning out the name of [redacted] I beat my breast, and betrayed every symptom of despair. He spoke comfort to my soul, for he assured me of her safety, and strongly recommending fortitude of mind. He then untied his horse from a tree just by, and enjoining silence, forced me to mount him, while himself walked in silence by my side; nor could all my persuasions induce him to satisfy my inquiries concerning my wife. A few hours brought us to our dwelling, where, yielding to the intreaties of this unparelleled friend, and the distressing tenderness of my second mother, I consented to endeavour to seek that repose, the perturbation of my mind had so long denied me.

"The shades of evening had nearly fallen, when Sebastian entered my chamber, leading in my little Angela, whose innocent carresses, in some degree, softened the pangs that wrung my heart. I fixed my eyes on Sebastian, but dared not ask tidings of my unfortunate wife: but he reading my anxiety, prevented my questions by relating the event of the preceding day.

'My

'My lady,' said he, 'had employed me in a charitable commission for her:—the cottage to which I was directed, lies about two miles beyond old Matthew's, the wood-cutter. These commissions were always secret, and I have done many such a one for her which nobody ever knew.'

"On his arrival, he found the family in great spirits, on account of their son, who was a soldier, having got a furlough to spend two days with them. He had not been there long, when a man knocked loudly at the door, calling for some water for a lady who had fainted—the cot was all confusion in a moment, the sound of the stranger's voice, and a glimpse of his person, though disguised under a heavy military cloak, instantly reminded him of the man who had already given us so much alarm. Conviction at once flashed upon his mind: he instantly mentioned his fears, without telling his name, to the young soldier, who agreed to follow him, and die, if necessary, in such a cause. Unperceived they left the cottage; the carriage was now at some distance, but using the utmost diligence, they still kept

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it within sight, following the torch carried by one of the horseman. Many miles they ran without scarcely stopping to take breath, for fear they should lose this friendly beacon; and were nearly exhausted, when providence directed, that the coach should stop at a decent looking dwelling out of the road, which was a cross one, and so little frequented by carriages, that not one passed sometimes for days together.

"The honest owners of the house had retired for the night; but alarmed at the hollowing of the men, ordering them to rise, they obeyed, and opened the door. By that time my friends were arrived, and had taken their stand so as to see the persons who entered, and Sebastian, convinced it was my wife, carried senseless into the house, informed his companion of this circumstance, and concerted with him what measures to pursue. They were both unarmed, therefore could not attempt her rescue: but the window being thrown open to admit air, enabled them to overhear the conversation, which represented Zamira as a worthless wife, going to suffer the just punish-

ment of her crimes, by being consigned to a convent for the rest of her days.—A gentle female voice then intreated that the lady might be suffered to rest an hour or two, that she might be better able to travel, for she was sure she would die if they forced her to go on. Fear, and not pity, induced the inhuman ruffians to agree to the proposal; and my unfortunate wife was conveyed to the young woman's chamber, which joined that in which the party sat, one of whom came out, and put the horses into a sort of shed which served for a stable.

"They now quitted their place, and by degrees getting round to the other side of the house, waited for a favourable opportunity of liberating Zamira. The young woman, after administering consolation to my afflicted wife, sat down by her, while her father and brother remained with the three men who had the charge of her, in the kitchen adjoining, and supplied them with the best refreshment their house afforded. The man shortly after called his daughter, who rose and quitted the room: The happy moment was now come; Sebastian,

bastian gently opening the lattice, entered the apartment, and approaching Zamira's bed, told her to take comfort, for relief was at hand. Fortunately her great faintness prevented the shrieks of surprise, which might have been fatal to her. A few minutes after the young woman entered: Sebastian instantly stepped forward and secured the door, at the same time threatening her with immediate death if she uttered a sound, and, in a few words, stated the facts as they really were, which Zamira corroborated, intreating her to have pity on her, with the most persuasive looks and gesture. Tears flowed from the poor girl's eyes, as she declared she did not believe the lady guilty, and would do all in her power to assist her.

"The youth on the outside now said every-thing was ready. Sebastian quickly explained his intention, while the former entering through the window, in a very respectful manner offered his services.

"Prudence demanded some caution; and the young soldier was left to guard the maid, lest her terror should induce her to divulge Zamira's flight. Her faithful deliverer then assisted

my

my wife to descend from the window, when seating her on the horse, and mounting be-hind, he conveyed her without accident back. With great difficulty she supported herself during the journey, and finding, on inquiry, I had been gone many hours, unattended, and no tidings arriving of me, her agitation and fears had produced some alarming symptoms, that required medical aid. 'Sebastian added, 'she was better,' but begged to be left alone till the following morning."

"This excellent servant," said Rosalia, "had, no doubt, gone in search of you, as soon as informed of your absence."

"He had, madam, and pursuing the road he had already passed, arrived in time to succour me.

"I bore with impatience this delay, and rising early, ventured to my wife's door, intending to wait there till some one approached to announce me. Zamira's voice reached my ear; the tones of consolation fell from that of her mother, and unable to restrain my impatience, I entered, and running towards her, pressed her to my breast. My unexpected ap-

pearance

pearance was too much: she fainted in my arms; and when recovered, remained in so languid a state, that I shuddered with terror as I beheld her."

The stranger paused, mournfully resting his forehead upon his hand, and, after some moments of silence, uninterrupted by Rosalia, who feared to breathe, lest she should disturb his reverie, he raised his head, wiped away a tear, and continued in a hurried tone,

"Let me not dwell on this dreadful period of my life!—My beloved Zamira never recovered the shock she had sustained! She fell into a malady of languor, and a few weeks deprived me of the first, the only woman I had ever loved! Her mother's grief and despair knew no bounds, and four short days increased my distress, by tearing from me this kind, this tender friend, whom, next to my wife and child, I valued more than every earthly good! I lived—I cherished life! but it was the hope of vengeance!

"My faithful Sebastian tried every means to calm the sullen stupor that had seized me, and awakening me, even to misery; for my rigid

nerves refused to bend beneath the stroke. Even the caresses of my child were disregarded! Revenge burned in my veins, and lighted up so violent a fever in my blood, as for some time baffled the power of medicine.

"The first object that caught my eyes on recovering my recollection, after a maddening fever of the brain, was my innocent Angela kneeling on my bed, her little hands encircling my neck. The name of father roused me, and clasping my darling to my bosom, I burst into tears, and sobbed aloud. My kind Sebastian, who was sitting in a distant part of the chamber, now approached, and shed tears of joy at seeing me thus restored to life and consciousness.

"As I regained my strength, my desire of vengeance returned; but I beheld my child, and my heart whispered, thou art now her only protector, and canst thou venture a life which is so necessary to her welfare. My friend also had tasted the bitter cup of sorrow; he had lost his youngest boy. Poor Agatha had long been in a declining state, and very soon added one more to the melancholy list of mortality. We

sympathized

sympathized in each others grief; and to the endearments of my sweet child, do we owe the return of health, and blessings of consolation.

" He had long been independant. The only favour we had in our power to bestow, for my obligations to him were beyond all pecuniary reward, even before the rescue of my beloved! His eldest son was my god-child, and his establishment in the world was my concern. He had been placed some time before, at college education; and thinking my faithful friend might wish to settle in that neighbourhood, where he might enjoy his society, though my heart throbbed at the idea of parting, I proposed our separation; for our residence, once the seat of peace, was now changed into the house of mourning; and he, as well as myself, I was certain, wished to quit it. Sebastian acted like himself, and refused to desert his suffering friend. Our arrangements were soon made. We set off for Paris, where, during a residence of some months, I endeavoured to divert my melancholy; but in vain: every ob-

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ject only reminded me of the loss I had sustained; and in the bustle of that gay city, I sighed after those scenes of innocent tranquillity that were for ever vanished.

"During my stay there, I settled the business that had originally, more than the desire of having recourse to novelty, induced me to undertake the journey. This was to lodge my jewels in secure hands, as well as the property I had assigned to Sebastian and his son, and that which was to be Angela's portion, in case sudden death should snatch me from her.

"We returned to our home; but all happiness was fled; every apartment, every walk, reminded me of my departed friends. The sympathy shewn me by the neighbouring families who had loved my wife and mother, instead of offering consolation, augmented my regret. Momentary starts of vengeance still occupied my thoughts; and in one of these, regardless of the misery it might create, I should have sought the despoiler of my house, had not pity, as well as paternal love, restrained me.

"The

"The monster was the husband of one of the most interesting of women, and whose affection for him was unbounded. Unable to support my feelings in a place the remains of all my soul held dear, I sold my estate, and, with my child and faithful friend, commenced a journey which was to occupy several years.

"We visited the principal towns and different curiosities of France, Italy, and Switzerland, crossed the channel, resided some time in London, and spent many months in examining the manners of a people so deservedly esteemed throughout the globe. Angela's improvement during this time was not neglected. The most perfect masters in the fine arts, were constantly engaged for her in every place in which we remained a few weeks, and, with rapture, I observed, the ductibility of her mind equalled the exterior beauty and grace of her person. Early addicted to a love of literature, which was cultivated and improved by an excellent father, I was myself able to direct her mental studies; and my heart has often bounded with joy, on observing, from her remarks and feelings on the authors she perused, that she united

the fortitude of a hero, to the gentleness of a dove. This portrait, madam, is drawn by a father's pencil; but should my Angela ever be intimately known to you, as I hope she may, your generous mind will do justice to its truth."

"Beauty and elegance are undoubtedly hers," replied Rosalia, "and fortitude, prudence, and gentleness, are scarcely less apparent in her, than her personal attractions. I long to press her to my heart and call her friend. Ah! why has heaven denied me such a sister! But pardon my interrupting you—your narrative is so interesting, that the *subject alone* could plead in my excuse."

The stranger bowed, and, with a smile of thanks, continued.

CHAP. III.

"I Had ever admired the romantic scenery of Switzerland; and Angela's admiration of its sublime and simple beauties was so great, as to make her form a wish to settle there. Her wish was always mine. Thither we returned; and after again traversing this delightful country, chose for our abode the charming neighbourhood of Lausanne. Mountains, rocks, and smiling villages, rising within the compass of the eye, varied our prospect, and the beautiful lake of Geneva washed the terrace of our garden.

"Two years passed in this retirement: in the society of my daughter, I had at length taught my heart resignation, and cheerfulness began to dispel the traces of sorrow that had so long furrowed my countenance. Angela, now in her sixteenth year, united beauty to

grace, and a cultivated mind to both. I longed to see the admiration she would attract, and determined again to visit Italy. Alas! how fatal are the effects of vanity—how severe their punishment!

"Another and a better motive also inclined me to this journey. Many persons, who had known my father in his boyish days, still existed, and among them a female cousin—the playmate and friend of my sister: a woman at once lovely and virtuous, and who merited a better fate than that which had befallen her. The last tidings I could gain of her were, that left a widow in rather indigent circumstances, she lived in retirement with an only son, in the vicinity of Celano. In the course of our travels, every means was employed to discover the retreat of this amiable woman, whose lot it was both my duty and wish to ameliorate; but all inquiry was fruitless. In my present journey I determined to apply personally to some of the haughty families she had married into, and through their means discover the place of her solitude. My earnestness even exceeded the mere desire of

seeing

seeing her. Her son, I was sure, must be amiable and well educated: I loved my child with tenderness, and contemplated with anxiety the moment in which I might be snatched away, and she left alone to struggle with the world; therefore, if the youth should, on acquaintance, be one to whom I could with safety confide her happiness, and their inclination for each other meet my wishes, I resolved to intrust him with my soul's dearest treasure, my Angela; for my heart longed to embrace this nearest relative fate had left me, and, in the union of our children, once more make but one family, and, in some measure, live over the scenes of our youth afresh. If all with which I flattered my fancy did not arrive, my wealth, at least, enabled me to raise them to that affluence their rank and merit demanded."

"On arriving, my first care was to demand an audience of the conde di Chiamonti, my cousin's brother in-law; but a painful disease confined him to his chamber, and every stranger was denied admittance. My other inquiries were equally fruitless, and despairing of success, I determined only to wait the issue of

the count's malady; and in case of his death, take some public means of discovering their abode, by employing an agent for that purpose, whose reward should be proportioned to his diligence.

"In my first journey, two or three noble families, my neighbours at Avignon, had furnished me with letters to some persons of distinction at Florence, who received us with the utmost urbanity, and by every means endeavoured to render our stay agreeable. They now received us with open arms. Angela's attractive and modest beauty was irresistible: she became the protegee of women of worth, the envy of coquets, and the idol at whose shrine the men bowed down. My heart exulted at her success; and the more so on observing the modest diffidence that marked every action of her blameless life.

"One evening I accompanied her to a ball and supper at the marchesa del Balzo's, who had shewed us many marks of attention. On entering the saloon, the mistress of the fête introduced a gentleman as her

relative

relative to the company, who was just arrived from Madrid.

"Judge of my surprise and horror, on beholding my mortal enemy; and at its increase on remarking his insolent looks glance over the party, and fix on Angela in a manner which prevented his observing me, who stood near her. In the same moment, with a mixture of boldness and fawning, he desired the honour of her hand, if disengaged, presenting his to her. The blood rushed to my cheeks.

"Monster!" cried I, half suffocating with rage, and rushing between him and my child—I hastily caught her hand, led her from the room, and in a confused manner apologizing to the lady for our abrupt departure, quitted the house.

"My faithful Sebastian immediately understood the necessity of leaving a place in which we were liable to become the prey of a villain; and lost not a moment in preparing for our journey. The carriage was directly ordered, every thing hastened, and in less than two hours, we were on the road to Switzerland.

With what pleasure I once more beheld our peaceful habitation! I embraced my child with tears of joy, and imparted to her enough of her mother's unfortunate story, and the share the wretch I had snatched her from had had in it, to inspire her mind with horror at his guilt.

"My first care, after a few days repose, was to employ two persons of merit and integrity to inquire my long lost cousin's abode. Angela's want of another protector became daily more pressing; my enemy's power was too great to defy; the malignancy of his obdurate heart was even greater—that no human influence would turn him from the dark designs he once had formed, experience had fatally convinced me!

"Many months elapsed, and my fears had died away, when Sebastian entered my room in extreme agitation: he bade me instantly adopt some plan to save myself and daughter, for the arch fiend had discovered our retreat, and ruin threatened us. He had scarcely spoken, when he fell at my feet, and fainted. I then first perceived that he was wounded, for

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the blood streamed from his side; but this truly worthy man had the courage, by pressing a handkerchief to the wound, to stanch the blood, while he informed me of our danger. Angela, who was present, assisted in recovering our mutual friend, and weeping over him, prepared the linen to bind up his wound. No chirurgical assistance being within some miles, obliged me to exert the little skill I had learned in the army in my youth. The wound was not in itself dangerous; the only ill effect to be apprehended, was from the fever that was likely to follow.

"He informed us, it was given him by a person masked, as he approached the house; that turning round to seize him, a scuffle ensued, and the villain had made his escape.

'I fear,' added he, 'the stroke was intended for you; therefore fly immediately, and avert a doom that would leave your daughter to the mercy of a ruffian!'

"Indignation, instead of fear, filled my bosom: I insisted on meeting this dastardly assassin, and swore to deprive him of a life he thus disgraced.

"My

"My friend argued more coolly.

'I would advise your having recourse to the magistrate, whose duty it is to protect and avenge the oppressed: but could you depend on the honour of one who is a slave to the passions himself? No, no; suffer me to persuade you—quit this place as soon as possible. In a few days I shall be able to join you: till then I will keep close within the house—none of the attendants know of my being wounded; the villain himself does not know it for a certainty. He will, no doubt, now lie concealed for a time, till suspicion is hushed.'

"I determined to follow the counsel of this approved friend, and after having balanced for some minutes on the place most likely to afford me an asylum, I fixed on Sicily, my native land."

Rosalia looked earnestly at her guest. She longed to speak, to question him, but respect kept her silent.

"Here I intended to wait the arrival of my faithful Sebastian, who was to join me as soon as the person employed in search of my relation should return. I then determined to bid

adieu

adieu to a land that had been so fatal to my peace, should the hope I had formed for my child's happiness be blasted; and with her and our mutual friend retire to England, hoping at least there to find a secure asylum. Did it succeed, I resolved to throw her on the protection of the conde Chiamonti, who was now slowly recovering, and who must, from the pride of blood, and the honour of nobility, protect his nephew's wife—a nephew raised to the splendour of his rank by his union with her; while I challenged the despoiler of my peace to answer for his crimes.

"Sebastian, who saw my wish to remain a few hours to watch his health, strongly urged my immediate flight.

'I shall do very well,' said he: 'a few days will enable me to follow.'

"Yielding at length to his entreaties, I bade my Angela prepare for our departure. Agnes, the young female who had succoured my unfortunate wife, had been sent for by her immediately after, and had from that time faithfully served my daughter. She could depend on her fidelity, and confiding her present embarrassment

rassment to her, arrayed herself in some of her simplest apparel, and charging her to attend with unremitting care to Sebastian, promised to send for her as soon as possible. I believe the few domestics about me were all faithful; but their discretion was more doubtful, and determined me to go unattended. My own dress required little alteration, being extremely plain. However, I did not neglect to carry fire arms, and two daggers, one of which my daughter concealed in her bosom.

"Thus equipped, we set out unobserved, arrived at a hamlet about a league from our habitation, and rested at a convent for the night, Angela passing for my niece. The following morning we hired two mules, and continued our journey unmolested, till evening warned us it was time to seek a place of rest. This we soon found in a little rustic cot, where the good will of the owners amply repaid the indifference of the accommodations and homely fare. The host offered to attend us as guide: this was accepted, and we found him honest, civil, and faithful. At the end of three days

we

we dismissed him to his home, and at his recommendation, engaged another to attend us.

" In this manner we traversed the beauteous plains of Italy, still avoiding populous cities, by taking, if necessary, a circuitous road, and sometimes resting several days, as soon as we supposed all danger of pursuit was over. At length the Mediterranean caught our view. We stopped some days at a sequestered village near Naples before we embarked, sold our mules, and brought such necessaries as were proper for the new mode of life in which we were engaging.

" We embarked in a common passage vessel, and after much boisterous weather, landed at Palermo. The following morning we began another journey in search of an habitation, which might afford us an asylum. That day's search was unsuccessful; but the next brought us to a decent cottage, whose owners were willing to cede it to us.

" This cottage, by Angela's taste and exertion, was soon converted into a little paradise, and some time passed in apparent tranquillity; but the novelty once over, my heart sighed

after

after those pursuits my mind had ever loved. We were destitute of books, and Sebastian arrived not: fear sometimes mixed with our ennui, lest he should have fallen a victim to malady, or to the vengeance of our common enemy.

"Time rolled on—still no tidings arrived. Unable to conquer our anxiety, or find that amusement we were wont to do in the beautiful and sublime scenes of sea and land that surrounded our dwelling, at length I yielded to my daughter's wishes, and engaged a man to go to Naples, to procure us books, globes, and mathematical instruments. He carried a written order, and executed the commission with fidelity. Life now again had some charms; we awoke with the dawn, and in general, when the weather permitted, watched the rising of the star of day from the oozy bosom of the main, as we walked on the sandy beach, or climbed the lofty cliffs that rose in awful majesty around.

"The distant turret of the castle in which I first drew my breath, could just be descried in the distance, for our residence was a few miles from

from the spot; but Angela's wish to behold the place of my birth, and my own desire also leading me to contemplate the ruins of a fabric, once the seat of cheerfulness and benevolence, the scene of my childhood and youth, made me consent to her proposal, and appoint an early day for our excursion.

"My intention was to engage two of the honest fishermen, our neighbours, to land us near the spot which we intended to examine; and by conversing with some of the elder rustics in its vicinity, of their ancient lord, I hoped at the same time to gain a clear knowledge of the present owner, the vassals of a great man being seldom mistaken in his real character.

"The morning after this determination, we rose with the dawn, and bent our way as usual to the beach. The tide was flowing out: we stopped to admire the beauty of the calm waters retreating from the shore; and were continuing our walk, when a stranger crossed our path, and insisted on our return.

"To this benevolent man we owed our safety!—myself—my *life!* my daughter, *more*

than

than life! He conveyed us to an asylum so secure, in all human appearance, as to defy the search of mortal. But inscrutable are the ways of Heaven! even here the machinations of the wicked menaced us. To the violence of a dreadful storm: to the crush of mountains, and surrounding desolation, do we own our salvation! Chance, or rather the hand of Providence, directed to our solitude a noble youth, who, with all the enthusiasm of an uncorrupted heart, vowed to befriend us, and shed his blood, if necessary, in our defence. Generous young man! may the day arrive in which I am permitted to express my gratitude for thy noble ardour! And thou, beneficent, friendly monk, why cannot I press thee to my bosom, and give thy charitable hand the power of bestowing, in proportion to the greatness of thy expanded heart!"

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

"DID you escape without any farther dread from Sicily?" said Rosalia, interrupting the reverie into which he had fallen.

"Yes, madam: not to detain you longer on the misfortunes of a man who seems ordained to suffer through those objects the most dear to him, the most deservedly dear! we embarked with a captain engaged by our friendly monk, and the better to conceal ourselves, wore the habit of his order, which he had provided for that purpose, and in which we had left the caverns that had afforded us an asylum. Unhappily we carried a traitor in our company, who suspecting our disguise, found means to convince himself of its reality.

"We landed at Marsailles:' here, to avoid observation or inquiry, we laid aside our disguise,

guise, and pursued our way, weary with the continued state of terror and anxiety that oppressed us.

"Not knowing what measure to adopt for my child's welfare, I sometimes thought of travelling by easy journies to Paris, gain an audience of the sovereign, lay my misfortunes at his feet, and throw myself upon his protection. 'Surely the noble Henry,' said I, 'will not refuse his protection to a man, whose greatest fault has been inspired by pity.' I flattered myself, the simple garb we wore would suffer us to pass unnoticed. My wish might have succeeded, had not this traitor watched our steps, while he gave notice of his prize to our mortal foe.

"On entering the village the fourth day of our journey, I discovered the treachery of this man, who had won my confidence by his simple and apparently honest zeal, and whom I engaged to attend us; and I determined to punish him with rigour for his villany.

"On inquiring, he was absent, and returned not for the night: my alarm and terror at these tidings were extreme, and finding there was a

convent

convent of Benedictines within a league of the village, I prevailed on my sweet Angela to consent to a temporary separation, and reside there, while I should revisit our abode in Switzerland, concert measures with our faithful friend for our future safety, and having effected that, return and free her at once from her fears and confinement for ever.

"The evening was too far advanced to enable me to execute this plan; and the night was spent in advice to my daughter, in what manner she should act, supposing my return exceeded a given period. I wrote a few lines of solemn import to father Anselmo, my truly benevolent protector, at his convent in Sicily, leaving him guardian to my child, and trustee to all her property; conjuring him to discover the abode of my relative, and name my wishes to her.

"This billet was signed with my assumed and real name, and was to be given into his hand by Angela only, who was, by the permission of the abbess, to request his attendance on her at the convent, which I recommended her on no account to quit, till certain

of

of security. She was then to lay open the misfortunes of her parents, intrust to his feeling heart every circumstance of our unfortunate story, and religiously adhere to the counsel he should give. Morning dawned during our discourse, and the owners of our little cottage soon began their usual occupations. We parted in friendly wishes, and had the pleasure of observing our accustomed donations to the honest cottagers, whose humble cabins we constantly preferred to houses of public resort, gratefully received.

"On arriving at the convent, the abbess immediately honoured us with a conference. I informed her of the motive which induced me to confide my daughter to her care—begged her acceptance of some jewels of value—gave her a letter of unlimited credit on my agent at Florence; and particularly requested, that should my daughter express such a wish, that father Anselmo should be written to, and requested to attend,—he being her counsellor and friend; I found the lady knew the good father, and as her encomiums of him fell on my ear, my heart beat

responsive

responsive to their truth. We embraced in silence, and separated.

"I now felt all my courage revive, and after having visited my home, I resolved to pursue the villain who had driven me thence; and obtain, though late, the vengeance after which I thirsted.

"I now courted the cities I had before so cautiously shunned, and boldly examined every passenger, in the hope of meeting *him* I so lately dreaded.—My wishes were fruitless, I arrived at my home, and found it, to my astonishment, deserted; and weeds and grass growing between the pavement of my court-yard.

"The only intelligence I could obtain, was, that about a fortnight after my departure, the habitation was observed to be forsaken, which had excited some surprise among the neighbours, particularly the aged and the poor, who were my Angela's pensioners. Some days elapsed in examining the different places likely to contain any papers which might give an account of this extraordinary event, but in vain.—The drawers and closets, reserved for

my papers and objects of consequence, remained untouched, and every part of my habitation bore the marks of desertion, not of pillage.

"My anxiety became every day more intolerable—I had written to young Julius, Sebastian's son, but receiving no answer, determined to take a journey to Padua, to see him, and learn if possible tidings of his father:—the hope of gratifying my revenge, added also to my impatience—but again disappointment awaited me; I learned, however, that my enemy was at Naples; thither I pursued him; but again with fruitless speed: he had lately wedded a lovely woman, and was set off for Madrid.—Alas! poor victim of delusion!—may her fate be happier than that of the unfortunate Elvira!

"Thus secure of my child's safety, in his possession of a woman, whom I was informed he idolised, I waited with impatience, the moment when I should again embrace her, and hastening to the convent, received her from the hand of the abbess, improved in person and in mind.

"We returned to our abode, on the Genevan

Lake,

Lake, and once more employed every means in our power to find our friend, but in vain. Shortly after, to the many inquiries after my relative, my agent informed us he had discovered the place of her residence, that she was then absent on business, but was shortly expected. This intelligence conveyed joy to my heart; and with tears of pleasure, I communicated it to Angela, at the same time unfolded my secret and long-formed wish, that in a union with her cousin, supposing him such as my fond wishes painted him, she would find that protection and tranquillity I was unable to afford her. I determined to surprise them by our visit, and watch the effect of this first interview between the dearest object to me in life, and him I wished to adopt.

"Our little preparations were soon made, and Angela, taking an affectiouate leave of the worthy villagers, whom our return had soon assembled around her, entered the carriage that was to convey us to Nice.

"From this moment, I had the mortification to observe, that her cheerfulness hourly diminished; and to my surprise and grief, I some-

 times

times saw a tear trembled in her eye, and heard her stifle a sigh. Her happiness is my first concern, and I anxiously inquired the cause of this sudden change. Her reply was affectionate and serious: 'She was convinced I loved her tenderly, and was resolved not to repay my anxiety and care by repining at her lot; but she would chuse, were it right to indulge her choice, once our visits paid, to leave the continent altogether, retire to England, where we had some friends, and where the laws, if not the distance from our persecutor, would rescue our persons from outrage.'

"In my turn, I sighed at thus seeing my long fostered hopes of once more uniting our estranged family, destroyed in the bud; but existing only in my daughter, I instantly adopted the plan she proposed; secretly hoping however, that the youth would have merit sufficient to alter her resolution.

"We travelled rather late the last evening, intending to spend the night at a small village, about a league from their habitation; and devote the following day to the effusions of the heart, natural to true friendship, after an absence

of so many years. In anticipation I beheld the emotion and tenderness of my cousin, as she embraced the companion of her youth, the only brother of her earliest and dearest friend, risen as from the tomb, to present an unexpected blessing—a daughter worthy of her love!

" These pleasing ideas were in an instant dissolved, and changed to tears and sorrow. The horses were suddenly stopped by two ruffians, while a third, laying hold of Angela, dragged her from the carriage.—Since the day my unhappy wife was torn from me, I had always carried arms: instantly leaping out, I followed the assassins, and on coming up with the first, fired at him, I now found myself pinioned by another, who had not yet appeared, and frantic with rage and despair, I stamped, and invoked the heavenly powers to avenge my wrongs on the head of him who caused them. My daughter had fainted, from fright; and on her recovery, so earnestly implored not to be separated from me, that the ruffians, fearing the effect of her grief and terror, granted her prayer. They forced us into a carriage,

 waiting

waiting in a narrow road just by, and one of the party entered with us. It then drove violently for some hours, and stopped at a lonely hut to change horses. On beginning our journey, we had engaged two men, well armed to attend us: these during the late cruel scene did not appear; for either suborned by our enemy, or terrified at a superior force, they had taken to flight at the first sight of the ruffians who attacked us.

"We travelled many nights, frequently stopping during the day intirely, our guard never leaving us together a moment, and remaining inflexibly silent both to my intreaties and menaces. At length we entered this place, by whose order I am yet a stranger; yet no doubt by his who has been the cause of all my misery! the bane of all my earthly happiness! During the first few days we were permitted to be together, though never alone: it is now about four days since, that alarmed by my Angela's shrieks, breaking from the arms of my jailor, who endeavoured in vain to detain me, I flew to her aid; but ere I reached the apartment, I fell senseless beneath a blow on my head aimed

aimed by an unseen hand; and on awaking from my swoon, found myself in a dreary dungeon; from whence, like the liberating angel who opened the prison of St. Paul, you dispersed the shades of death, and restored me once more to hope and life!"

The stranger then leaned his head on his hand, fixed his eyes on the ground, and fell into a profound reverie; while Rosalia, whose feelings were strongly excited, frequently turned towards him, wishing, but not daring to ask his name.

"My uncle," said she, "it must be so;"—she longed to fall at his feet, and ask his blessing, but timid and irresolute, she forbore to interrupt the deep meditation which seemed to absorb his faculties; and waited his recovering from his extreme dejection, to reveal her name.

CHAP. XVI.

THE conde Rialves, basking in the sunshine of his master's smiles, daily rising in honour and preferment, and whose ambition had been gratified with the title of marquis, annexed to a large domain, to descend to his male heirs for ever; to every less favoured courtier was an object of envy. All beheld in him one of the most favoured of mortals; and his associates thought he had attained the pinnacle of earthly happiness: but Rialves was a stranger to content, for some new crime ever occupied his thoughts.

This unnatural father had never loved his children; and Alfonso, since the conversation on the subject of his sister's marriage, was become the object of his hatred: yet this Alfonso he now hated, must be, at his demise, the heir to his newly-acquired estates and titles.

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This idea rankling in his bosom, envenomed his peace, and blasted in the bud the fruits of his expected harvest.

He often cursed the being which the law obliged him to acknowledge; and as he gazed on donna Maria Estella, a young widow lady of the greatest beauty and fortune at court, he would deplore that the tie which bound him to the countess was indissoluble. From frequently dwelling on this idea, the possibility of effecting that wished-for dissolution rose in his mind, and shortly engrossed all his thoughts.

To aim at the liberty of his wife, while Alfonso lived, he knew was impossible, as he loved his mother too well, to bear patiently her suffering the smallest injury; much less would he pass over her suddenly disappearing without minute investigation: besides, his own fair fame must remain untarnished, for this was essential to his ambitious prospects, and his designs upon donna Maria.

However, to advance his suit, he constantly replied to all inquiries after the countess's health, "That she long had been subject to hectic attacks, to which he feared she would at

 length

length fall a victim;" and with many expressions of tenderness, lamented her singular love of solitude, which not only prevented her enjoying that society she was born to grace, but even rendered his dwelling a perfect desert.

Armed with this plausible excuse, he daily repassed the scheme he had planned, and finding it practicable, if cautiously pursued, and Alfonso absent, he determined to proceed to its execution. This was to decoy his unhappy wife to a convent, and oblige her to take the veil. Every convent would not suit his purpose: it was necessary that the one he fixed on, should be under the direction of a woman whose callous heart would be insensible to the emotions of pity, or the plea of justice. He looked round in his mind's eye for an emissary to assist in this nefarious scheme, and to whom he might delegate the conduct of an affair in which he could not appear in person. Father Hubert, he feared, was not to be depended on, supposing he could be found, which was not probable. Pedro, that arch-fiend, whose ruffian soul he rightly judged capable of every

deed

deed of darkness, if secured by power from punishment, and rewarded according to his wishes, he sought in vain: and after revolving the plan deliberately in his thoughts, he fixed on his own valet, a man of a vulgar, and mercenary mind, who had entered his service shortly after his marriage; and who had, from that time, been his spy over the actions of good old Jerome, whom he knew so sincerely attached to his lady, as to venture his life, if necessary, in her defence.

The removal of Alfonso was, however, the first object of his consideration. He wrote to him, assuming a kinder style than usual, requesting his return to Spain, and adding, that he longed to present a son, so worthy of his love, to his sovereign: at the same time making use of his influence over the monarch, he obtained a considerable appointment for him in the Spanish settlements, to which place it was necessary he should set out within a very short space.

Receiving no answer to his letter, he again wrote, informing him of the honour conferred, and requiring his immediate attendance. These

 dispatches

dispatches were sent to him at Salerno, to the baron de Montero's, and to signora Torapci's: but in vain—more than the necessary time of replying elapsed, without either Alfonso's arrival, or any tidings of him.

The coward soul of Rialves now took the alarm: conscious guilt shook his nerves, and as the period for embarking approached, and still Alfonso came not, his uneasiness increased; for another person was on the point of being named to supersede his son. His passions at length rose to such a pitch of fury, at thus losing, perhaps, the only opportunity of removing an object, whose scrutinizing eye he dreaded; that unable to conceal his agitation, he prudently asked leave to go in search of "this renegado young man, whose heedlessness, he doubted not, had drawn him into some disagreeable affair, which required a father's presence to extricate him from."

Rialves quitted his courtly associates with all the winning smiles of friendship, and expressions of the sincerest regard; but no sooner had he entered his carriage, than he gave vent to the

the malignancy of his nature, in vows of re-venge, and deep and inward curses.

Without apprizing the countess of his journey, he entered her apartment on his arrival, and angrily asked for Alfonso. His astonished and trembling wife beheld him with terror, and unable to reply, sunk into a chair, while with a menacing gesture he repeated his question.

"Almighty Power!" sighed she. "protect my son!"

"Insolent woman!" answered he, "Your son would be glad to take away my life. But let him tremble, for the moment of vengeance is near!"

"Barbarous man!" replied the agitated mother, clasping her hands, and raising them to Heaven—"the moment of vengeance, perhaps, is near for *thee*, when thou shall, in thy turn, implore for mercy, and find none!—St. Almi! my friend, my husband, hear me! If the spirits of the blessed can witness the sorrows of mortality, oh! guard my child!"

Rialves' lip quivered, his cheek turned pale, and his eye fearfully glanced around the apart-

ment.

ment. Then casting an indignant look on his wife, he rushed out of the room.

Old Jerome was next interrogated, and convinced his lord by his answers, that much time had elapsed since Alfonso had visited the mansion. Any farther account was beyond his power, except that his young lord talked of travelling to Nice, to see his friend Toranci, and pass some time with him.

Rialves then retired to his chamber, to meditate on the execution of his scheme in regard to the countess; and determined the following day to lodge the devoted victim in her destined abode. His valet, bribed by a considerable present to secrecy, had, upon his master's first intimation, mentioned a lonely monastery fit for this black design; where, shut out from the world by her prison walls, and from all social intercourse by the gloomy forest, whose tall and tufted trees rose like a rampart round its dreary inclosure, the hapless victim, once immured, in vain would cry for succour. Her name he had concealed, lest the wretch, shocked at so vast a crime, might be moved to pity a mistress whose wrongs he had so often wit-

nessed;

nessed; and in the terror of a wounded mind, put her on her guard—or even, perhaps, denounce his vile employer.

The necessary preparations were already made, and a large sum of money counted to present to the abbess of this dreary prison, who having been sacrificed in blooming youth to the ambition of her family, had grown old in practising those severities peculiar to a cloister.

During the silence of the night, Rialves repassed these objects in his mind; and reflected with regret on the fury of his behaviour on arriving, when a little prudence and decent civility might have facilitated his schemes. He determined the following day to repair the error, and after a sleepless night, passed in restless retrospection, and inventing schemes of future villany, he arose, and seeking the countess, embraced her with apparent tenderness, and asked her excuse for his preceding conduct, imputing it to his great anxiety for their children.

"Alfonso," added he, "I know does not love me; and when this thought comes across my mind, it makes me furious; but in the

present

present instance, it is my anxiety for him that moves me. Our sovereign has been graciously pleased to appoint him to a considerable post, and he is no where to be found—all my inquiries have been fruitless. I fear Alvermo—he is a villain! There is no atrocity of which he is not capable. He has treated our sweet Rosalia most basely; and has at last immured her within the walls of his detested castle. Perhaps in this very moment she is bleeding beneath his dagger, or lingering out her life by poison! But this arm shall reach the monster!"

Rialves was proceeding, when seeing her turn pale and stagger, he sprung forward, caught her in his arms, and thus prevented the blow, that probably might have dissolved at once that union he was so impatient to rend asunder. But there are some seeds of virtue implanted within the human breast, however corrupted, which prompts man, on a sudden impulse, to shew himself, however distant the affinity, to partake of the nature of the Deity. It was in such a moment that Rialves, though a stranger to sacred pity, and detesting his

wife,

wife, sprang forward to preserve from sudden death the victim he had condemned to a severe fate!—to linger out the remains of her wretched existence in the monastic cell, torn from the few blessings that still made her cling to life.

Leaving her to the care of her attendants, he hastily withdrew; and much time passed ere this unfortunate woman could be recalled to a recollection of the scene which had thus affected her. At length looking round her, as if in search of some absent person, she asked whether the count had really been there; and on finding it true, instantly insisted on going to his apartment.

He was walking to fro, and in evident agitation: but on seeing her, advanced towards her with unusual gentleness, and expressed his sorrow for having so affected her.

"Let us begone!" exclaimed she, laying her hand upon his arm. "Delay not an instant to save our child! Why is not Alfonso here to assist in so praiseworthy a deed?"

Rialves now, in a tender tone, endeavoured

to persuade her to remain, and suffer him alone to go to their daughter's rescue: but unlike her customary compliance with his wishes, she strongly urged her desire of accompanying him.

"Alas! who knows," said she, "whether my Rosalia is not a wretched prisoner within those fatal walls—the grave of the unfortunate Elvira! Perhaps I shall only arrive to receive her parting breath!—Heavens! perhaps she no longer exists! Oh! hasten thither, my lord, and in this one act of kindness towards me, let all my former misery be buried—I will bless you with my dying breath—only save my child!"

Rialves at length yielded to her reiterated entreaties, and gave Jerome orders immediately to prepare for their departure. The good old man bemoaned his hard fate, in being obliged to witness such frequent scenes of sorrow; and withdrew to execute his lord's commands. In a very short space all was in readiness: the count's valet stood ready to mount his horse; and the poor old steward also was equipped for

for the journey, when the count, looking at this faithful domestic, insisted on his stay. His constitution had received so great a shock in the scene preceding Rosalia's marriage, that he had never recovered its effects; the smallest agitation seemed to menace his faculties: and his pallid countenance, and trembling frame, in the present instance, proved how greatly this new misfortune had affected him.

"Three or four days at furthest, good Jerome," said the count, "will be the utmost of our stay. Remain, old friend, and see that all be properly arranged to receive us at our return. Rosalia also will join her thanks to ours, and during the rest of our lives we will endeavour to repair our errors, by living for each other!"

Jerome raised his eyes towards Rialves with astonishment: his villainous heart was not unknown to him. "Could kindness live within his corrupted soul? As well expect pity from the tiger!"

He cast an imploring look at the countess to stay behind, for suspicion had seized his mind

mind, the moment the accents of tenderness fell from Rialves' tongue.

His looks were lost on the ill-fated victim, as was her husband's speech; for her whole faculties being absorbed by the wretchedness of Rosalia's fate, rendered her unconscious to what passed around her. In the very instant of departure, the count leaping from the carriage, called to Jerome to follow, who immediately obeyed, in the hope some counter order would ensue.

"Give me the keys," said he, in haste.

"What keys, my lord?"

"The keys of my Sicilian castle,"

"Blessed virgin! you are not sure going to lock up my poor lady in that horrid place?"

"Old dotard! the keys I say."

"Oh! my lord," said the old man, with energy, "if you have the heart to hurt my lady any further, the punishment of heaven will fall upon your guilty head! Oh! think! think, of the old baron's kindness in your boyish days—think of my late lord! his goodness! his—Oh God!" kneeling, "his blessed spirit,

spirit wanders round that dwelling, once so dear to him! and he, dear lady, will protect thee, when all forsakes thee in the world besides!"

"Fool, give me the keys, and forbear your jargon."

"My lord, it is no jargon—I saw his venerable shade glide past the chapel window—and heard a hollow groan rise from beneath the altar, when I was standing near—As my soul hopes in Heaven, I did!"

"By Heavens, I'll strike thee to the ground, old hypocrite, and blast thy lying tongue for ever! Rise, and instantly give me the keys!"

The old man, crossing himself, and breathing a silent prayer, rose from his kneeling posture, and tottering towards the concealed partition, unclosed it, and entered to fetch the keys. One only remained—that which unlocked the outward gates. The rest had been removed, and, on the ring which held them, was also one similar to that which still was left. The surprise of Jerome was great; but the count's

Count's rage surpassed conception. Thrusting the trembling steward back with violence, he seized the key, denouncing eternal vengeance on his head, and hastily quitting the house, entered the carriage, and departed.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THE carriage now rolled quickly on.—The habitations of man faded gradually away: Rialves fell into one of his accustomed fits of taciturnity; while the countess, free from every suspicion of treachery, counting the hours that still separated her from Rosalia, pondered over her hapless lot, and invoked heaven to restore her in safety to her arms.

They stopped for a while to rest, at a decent looking cabin on the borders of a forest, and then continued their journey with redoubled speed.

At length they entered the road leading to Rosalia's confinement, and Rialves, raising himself, bent forward, and pointed nearly to the spot.

The countess thought she descried a turret

peep.

peep through the distant foliage, by the faint glimmering of twilight, and continued straining her eager sight to keep it still in view, till the tops of the surrounding mountains, and of the tall forest trees, were enveloped in the shades of evening. The carriage rapidly advanced; and Rialves, breaking the long silence, expressed his fears lest the lateness of the hour should prevent their gaining admittance, and proposed their seeking some habitation for the night, and defer their visit till the ensuing morning. The anxious mother, whose impatience to embrace Rosalia, became agonizing, intreated him to attempt an entrance: the count, with seeming hesitation, consented; observing at the same time, that a carriage might excite suspicion, and proposed her remaining there a few minutes, while he went alone to the gate. This was agreed to, and he instantly quitted her. Some time elapsed, and yet he returned not: at length his valet, advancing with great submission to the door, informed her his lord was admitted, and desired to know her pleasure. The carriage instantly, by her order, drove on, and its stopping,

while

while the heavy bolts were removed from the gates, gave this unfortunate victim of treachery a moment to recover from the extreme agitation which had seized her.

The wheels again rolled on—the carriage now turned into the court, and stopped at a gothic arched door, at which stood an elderly female with a light. Leaning on the valet's arm, she leaped out, and following the person who carried the light, demanded instantly to be led to her daughter's apartment. The woman turned round, looked at her in silence, then proceeded up a gloomy staircase, and throwing open a door, set down the taper and retired, saying, " she would send somebody to her."

The countess's agitation of mind prevented her reflecting on the singularity of this reception: her thoughts rested only on her daughter. Alas! she is no more, sighed the disconsolate mother, as she walked in agony across her narrow apartment, calling on Rosalia's name. At length, unable to endure the torture of suspense, she took the taper, quitted her apartment, and turned into an adjoining corridor. A door here stood on jar: with a trembling hand she

pushed it open, and entered. A young lady sat reading by the faint light of a lamp, who, on seeing her, arose and advanced to meet her. "My Rosalia, my child!" said she, running forward, and holding out her arms to embrace her. The motionless posture of the young female convinced the countess of her mistake. "Tell me," continued she, "whoever thou art, tell me, where is my child? Does she still exist? Where is my Rosalia? Where is the duke d'Alvermo?"

"Madam," replied the stranger, pressing her hand to her lips, "your Rosalia! my Rosalia! my friend and deliverer! is well! Heaven, who watches over the innocent, will protect her, and restore her to you—but do not name that wicked man. Alas! perhaps my dear father has fallen a victim to his cruelty."

Quick footsteps were now heard advancing along the corridor; and immediately a person entered, whose habit announced her a religious; and who, addressing the astonished countess in a haughty and unfeeling style, informed her, "the rules of her house must not be infringed, that at that hour every person had retired to her

cell," and leading the way, desired her to follow.

The dreadful truth broke upon her senses at once. She saw herself the dupe of an unfeeling husband, and felt with agony, that she was, perhaps, separated from her children for ever. Not a sigh rose to her bosom—not a tear moistened her eye; but in this trying moment, when all human aid was vain, she clasped her hands together, raised her heart to heaven, resting her cause on the justice of her Maker, and prayed for fortitude to enable her to support the load of sorrow it was her lot to bear.

The young lady once more pressed her hand to her lips, and ventured to whisper comfort.

The afflicted countess cast a look of affectionate inquiry on her unknown consoler, and, with an air of dignity, followed the abbess to the cell provided for her, where, calmly wishing her a good night, she closed her door, and seating herself at the little window, passed in review the various sorrows of her eventful life.

Her mind, in this painful crisis, maintained a placid calm. Alfonso was, she hoped, beyond her cruel husband's power. Rosalia, she was assured, by an angel in human form, was safe. Her children, like the Roman matron, she considered as her only treasures, and, on their health and safety she founded her hopes of happiness.

Angela, on taking leave of her deliverer, with hasty steps had pursued the path pointed out towards the convent, at which she arrived insensible of fatigue and faintness. On ringing the bell, a lay sister appeared, but refused to admit her, unless authorized by the superior. The trembling girl stood looking round in agony during her absence, lest any of Alvermo's emissaries should have pursued her thither. The nun's long stay considerably increased her alarm. The sound of footsteps reached her ear. "Father Hubert," exclaimed she, clasping her hands together, "where are you—Oh! fly to my protection!"

"Donna Rosalia!" replied a man advancing towards her—"thank Heaven! I am able, in

one

one instance of my life, to atone for my crimes to the lady Angela, by saving her daughter!"

The penitent monk was now near; he gazed with surprise on Angela, while she heard him with astonishment pronounce her name. She, in a few words, informed him of her confinement, and deliverance by Rosalia: then, in a hurried breath, talked of her father's imprisonment, and intreated him to join his endeavours to her friend's for his release. This Hubert solemnly promised. He then rang with authority, and commanded the gates to be opened. His mandate was instantly obeyed, and Angela was received by the assembled nuns, with an air of curiosity and surprise that much distressed her. Her modest garb announced her a person of no great note; and her pallid aspect, and languid eye, instead of exciting pity, were the subjects of many illiberal whispers and surmises; while her wandering about the country, alone, without guide, or protector, was a theme of indelicate merriment to the thoughtless sisterhood.

Time passed heavily with her, and to the solitude of her dreary cell, had she retired to

 escape

escape from the sneer and satire of low-minded ignorance, when the countess entered.

At a very early hour the matin bell summoned the community to prayer. The countess instantly obeyed the call, and entered the chapel amidst the gazing curiosity of the sisterhood. Her dignified carriage, placid mien, and unfeigned piety, partly silenced the illiberal whispers that rose to the lips of the observant nuns, whom calumny had taught to despise her. The mass followed. This angelic woman approached, and kneeled down on a step at the little door within the iron grate, to receive the host from the hand of the officiating priest, when the attending priest, giving a deep groan, fell back on the floor. It was Hubert—the guilty penitent Hubert! The countess's heart beat quick; she trembled, but spoke not. He was instantly conveyed from the chapel: the confusion caused by this event soon subsided; and the mass was concluded without any further interruption.

Some days elapsed without any fresh occurrence, during which she tried to regain her composure.

composure. Hubert did not appear. His surprise at beholding his injured benefactress kneeling before him, a prisoner in the confines of an austere cloister, overpowered him; and retrospection forcibly rushed upon his mind, with all its attendant horrors. His alarmed conscience nightly brought his murdered lord before his view—he met him in imagination in all his haunts—his solemn voice again sounded in his ears. He wandered a wretched being—a prey to the stings of poignant remorse; and, emaciated by the continual fasting and penance, to which he had condemned himself, his health became daily more enfeebled; and, as a further act of expiation, he demanded leave to make his public confession in the church, while his strength would yet permit him. The countess, affected at his contrition, combatted this intention; for she wished to draw a veil over his crimes, and her own sufferings; but Hubert insisted. Curiosity having been raised in the bosoms of the sisterhood, whose very few opportunities of gratifying it rendered them the more eager in the

 present

present instance, this atonement was accepted, and the following day appointed to witness this extraordinary confession.

The countess, who had exerted all her persuasion to prevent this act of humiliation, and finding it of no avail, now wrote a note, requesting him to conceal the names of the parties; and withdrawing from the eye of observation, devoted the whole of that solemn day to fasting and seclusion. The morning dawned, and rising unrefreshed, she fastened the door of her cell to avoid interruption, and fell into a mental review of all those cruel scenes his tongue was on the point of describing to the surprized and trembling assembly, and the crimes in which he had taken an active part. She was herself a stranger to many things he no doubt would relate: she had been the victim of treachery and avarice, she well knew; but on what springs had moved the grand machine which had doomed her to so many years of misery, she was still ignorant. However painful the circumstances, yet sometimes the desire of ascertaining that dreadful truth

would

would rise to her mind, and occupy her thoughts; but on the present occasion she felt that she should be unable to bear the soul-harrowing disclosure from the mouth of Hubert, even if a sense of propriety had not rendered her absence necessary.

CHAP. VIII.

THE interest this amiable woman had excited in Angela's generous bosom, induced her, although youthful curiosity might incline her to be present at a confession, which seemed to promise much food for reflection, to offer her company and services to the afflicted stranger. Many attempts to hold some minutes conversation had been made by both; but the jealous vigilance of the sisterhood, particularly one employed to watch their motions, had rendered them ineffectual; which the countess observing, and likewise that her young friend, unprotected and suspected, might eventually suffer by her goodness of heart, for the last few days had avoided the young pensioner's society, as much as she had before courted it.

Angela, on her side, much wished to converse with

with the interesting matron, and for this once her request was granted. Expectation of some interesting tale had lulled suspicion in the abbess's breast, and good nature had sprung up in its place. One reason more, perhaps, produced this change. The preceding morning she had presented a ring of considerable value to the admiring abbess, as a small token of her gratitude, for the protection she had received in her house, at the same time intimating, that a parent, who would shortly claim her, would remember the obligation with eternal thanks. Smiles, a gracious reply, and much complacency of manner, had been the return. The little nobody who had begged an asylum, had disappeared; and now presented to her imagination, some high born dame, whose wealth and power would give consequence both to her convent and herself. Her curiosity was also raised, and she resolved, as soon as father Hubert should have gratified that which his behaviour and promised confession inspired, to draw her young protegée into a disclosure of her secret.

When Angela requested leave to decline be-

ing present, urging, the agitation the stranger would naturally feel during a relation that, no doubt, contained some of the most important secrets of her life, rendering it improper she should be left alone, the abbess expressed some surprise, and inquired whether she knew the lady: she answered, "No—that the first time of her having ever seen her was the night of her arrival, when, by chance, she had entered her cell. She did not even know her name."

"My child," said the abbess, patting her head, "I believe what you say is true, and for this once grant your request; but you must never make me such another. Donna Marcella is not a fit companion for *you*, myself, I should fear to associate with her. She is an abandoned woman, whose family are obliged to confine her, to prevent her vices disgracing them."

Angela gave an incredulous look, fortunately unobserved by the speaker, who, in haste to summon her nuns to the chapel, graciously nodded as she left her to follow the bent of her own inclination. The abbess impatiently descended the staircase, and her pen-

sioner, fearing a counter order, hastened along the corridor, and tapped at the countess's door. It was instantly opened. The pleasure that beamed in Angela's expressive eye, communicated a momentary glow to the countess's pallid cheek, who, opening her arms, received her young guest into them, and pressed her with emotion to her heart.

"Ten thousand thanks, kind girl, for your intelligence! My Rosalia lives, and is well, you assured me! Repeat your assertion once more —you would not, sure, deceive a parent!"

She repeated her assertion with energy, and kissing the countess's hand, informed her of her having obtained leave to pass the morning with her.

"Tell me your name, sweet girl; let me call you daughter! you remind me of Rosalia; and my heart already has adopted you."

"My name is Angela; that of my family I am not permitted to divulge. I have no mother. Alas! before reason taught me well to estimate her value, she was taken from me. I hail your adoption with gratitude, and will endeavour to deserve your love."

"My

"My dear Angela! said the countess, blessing her, may Heaven grant you a more propitious fate, than her's whose name you bear!—My parents, at my birth, hailed me as an *angel* sent to console them after the loss of an only daughter; but nothing can be more at variance than my destiny, and the name I bear!"

A pause of some minutes ensued.

"So, my dear Angela," said the countess smiling, "you stifled the curiosity, so natural to the human heart, and preferred passing an uninterested hour with me, to becoming mistress of some events that would lay open to you the secret history of your adopted mother?"

"I can boast no merit in the sacrifice; for I have more real pleasure in the one than in the other; besides, it were a very blameable curiosity in a child, to steal unsanctioned into her mother's secret history."

"Charming girl!" tears rose to her eyes. "Your generous forbearance shall not go unrewarded; the day will come when my heart shall expose to your view, even its most secret thought."

The conversation became animated. The

most

most tender expressions of affection flowed from their lips—the tender names of mother and child were reciprocally given and exchanged, and Angela gave a succinct account of her becoming acquainted with Rosalia, and dwelled with delight on her virtues.—She sighed deeply on mentioning her father's confinement, under the apprehension of his fate: but continued, "My sister Rosalia promised to liberate him, and I think her promise is sacred."

"You may be sure it is:—from her infancy the sacred character of truth has been engraven upon her mind; and I am certain no obstacle, however threatening, would have power to turn her from a purpose which duty shall have dictated."

Angela sighed involuntarily, drew a picture from her bosom, and kissed it—"It is my father," seeing the countess look at it.

"Your father," taking it from her and attentively examining it—"it reminds me of a beloved brother, whom fate snatched from me many years ago—the first real sorrow I had ever known!"

"Alas!" replied Angela "he is much changed,

changed, scarce a trace now remains of what he then was,—it was reckoned very like him once."

The countess, still examining the picture, drew a small case from her pocket, opened it, and compared it with the one she held.

" Mine is the picture of a younger man," said she, " but the features are somewhat alike; the dark expressive eye, the serene countenance: they might by the resemblance have been brothers:—then putting the case into Angela's hand, she continued looking at that which had at first attracted her notice. The case the countess gave her contained two miniatures, on each side one. After a few moments passed in silence, she raised her eyes, and observed those of her young friend fixed, not on Valdenza's, but the other picture.

" You do not know that picture!" said she, with a deep sigh, and tremulous voice?

" I have seen him," replied Angela, shutting the case, and blushing a scarlet die.

" Seen him!" exclaimed the agitated countess, earnestly examining her;—" where, and when?—It is impossible—the beloved original has

has long, long been numbered with the dead! He fell in battle full twenty years ago—my husband, my St. Almi!"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Angela, falling on her knees and bedewing her hand with tears:—"St. Almi, my father's best, his earliest friend! his sister's husband!"

Surprise and doubt chilled her trembling frame, and stretching out her arms to her brother's kneeling child, she fainted on her neck. Angela used every means her ideas suggested, to restore her to life without alarming the community. At length her care and reiterated efforts prevailed; and the countess, bursting into a flood of tears, pressed her to her bosom with wonder, joy, and gratitude.

Upwards of two hours had elapsed in this conversation, and subsequent affecting scene: when recovering sufficiently from her agitation, to attend to the relation, the countess intreated her niece to relate the events of her father's life, who was just beginning her narrative, when a quick footstep from the corridor reached them. A nun soon after entered, and approaching the countess, with great respect, informed her

that

that father Hubert had fainted twice during his confession: that he thought his dissolution was near, but that he dared not receive the host, unless sanctioned to that holy act, by a pardon pronounced from her lips; and that if she refused him that consolation, yet he *must* see her, having a secret to disclose to her private ear, which, should he depart without having communicated, would damn his soul to eternal torments. During this address the nun crossed herself many times, and muttered an ave-maria.

The countess instantly arose, and putting her arm within Angela's, descended with trembling steps to the chapel.

The abbess, from respect to the prisoner (who was become an object of veneration to the whole sisterhood, since the penitentiary confession of father Hubert) had cleared the chapel, and ordered every person to her cell during this solemn interview.

At the door, Angela offered to retire— "No, my new-found child," said the countess, "stay and support me in this awful scene, and assist me in speaking comfort to the wounded soul of this unhappy man!"

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THEY entered: Hubert was resting his wasted frame against the edge of the high altar, on whose steps he kneeled:—on seeing them he covered his face with his hands, and prayed aloud for mercy.—They both hastened to him; and his injured mistress, in a compassionate and tremulous voice, bade him trust to the mercy of Heaven.

"Alas!" said the trembling wretch, "you know not half your wrongs! but pardon me, best of the human race! alas! how can you pardon him who has rewarded all your kindness with base ingratitude and treachery!'

Assuring him of her forgiveness, she called heaven to witness the deed, and prayed to receive forgiveness for her sins, in proportion to her sincerity.

"Then may I die in the hope of mercy, for

for heaven has been witness to my sincere contrition!—My crimes have been manifold, and their enormity has weighed down my soul to the pit; but your generous pardon, the assurance of forgiveness from St. Almi, my lord! my friend!—on that awful night, when his sainted spirit stood between me and eternal perdition."

"Your senses wander, good Uberto," said the countess, laying her cold hand on Angela for support.

"Oh! no, my lady—my senses are collected: I saw him in the chapel—*you*, with upraised hands imploring for that mercy you so nobly give: but my heart of stone was untouched by pity. His awful form arose—pointed to you—and for the first time I felt remorse! That night, when silence reigned throughout the mansion, he stood at my bed-side—methinks I see him now, and hear his gentle voice: 'Uberto!' said he"——

"Gracious God!" exclaimed the countess, "why, if spirits are permitted to revisit this earth, why am I debarred the sight of him I love so well!—St. Almi, how often have I

called

called upon thy name—implored thy aid—yet thou replied not to thy suffering wife!"

"Alas! dear lady, the spirits of the dead are only sent upon some awful errand:—his monitory voice has saved perhaps my soul!—but your pure and gentle nature needed not the visitation of a departed friend risen from the tomb."

Some minutes of uninterrupted silence ensued: at length, Hubert, sighing deeply, continued: "I have a secret labouring at my bosom,"—he turned, fixed his eyes on Angela, and hesitated:

"Proceed, good Hubert; that young lady is very dear to my heart, she divides it with my children."

"Can you bear a joyful surprise?"

"Let me anticipate it—my brother lives!"

"Where did you learn the tidings?—Oh! conceal it—his life would pay the forfeit of such a discovery!"

"Explain yourself—you alarm me—by whom is his life menaced? and since when have you known that he still exists?"

"By

"By him whose cursed gold bribed me to sell my soul's best treasure, an unpolluted conscience?—him, who has blasted all the fair prospects of your early youth, and plunged you into misery! Two years are now elapsed since chance divulged the secret: however sunk I was in guilt, my soul revolted at the dreadful act intended—I even ventured to express a part of that horror which I felt. Irony and reviling were the reward of my compunction; and menaces of dreadful torture, if I betrayed my knowledge of this event. Alas! wretched sinner that I am! the commission of this dreadful deed filled my soul with dismay: yet, I could bear to think of its being perpetrated by another without much horror, so *I* were excused from dying my hands in blood! Some time from this period elapsed, when the sudden journey to your Sicilian castle was proposed, and immediately executed. I, by my lord's order, was left behind. It is only since that I have learned, that was to have been again the chosen scene for further horrors. Your brother, and his daughter, accomplished and lovely in mind and person, had retired to a modest cot-

tage

tage near the beach, thinking there to elude the pursuit of their enemy, and——"

"Where,—where, where did you learn this dreadful purpose?"

"From Roberto, the valet, whom my lord your brother had taken with him, when first he entered the army. After various crimes, he sold his perjured soul to don Antonio, and informed him that his master still existed. *He* was employed, with another ruffian, to perpetrate the deed of death:—Valdenza was to die!—his daughter to be compelled to take the veil. By some chance, unknown to Roberto, your brother was warned in time to quit his abode and seek an asylum. His companion and himself still lurked about disguised, and he discovered their retreat, by watching a friendly monk, whose wanderings at those hours when most men sleep, raised his suspicion; his fellow assassin was told the fact—and the hour of midnight appointed. During the day a quarrel rose between these ruffians — My blood chills while I relate, it was about the possession of my master's child, whom Roberto had dared to covet!"

Both

Both the countess and Angela gave a faint shriek.

"Alas! to what excess of wickedness will not the hardened heart arrive!" continued Hubert: "Their quarrel ended in blood, and the daggers destined to drink the blood of the innocent, were stained with their own. Roberto received a wound in his side, and was found, to all appearance dead, by a fisherman, who, as soon as he recovered sufficient strength to speak, by his intreaty conveyed him to the neighbouring monastery, where he confessed his guilt to the good monk, who protected his former master, and urged him not to lose a moment in providing for their safety. That night, which was to have sealed the fate of two beings, the most perfect of the human race, you must recollect; — old Geronimo said, from the days of his childhood he never remembered such another"

"Alas!" sighed the countess, "well do I remember it!"

"The all-wise governor of the universe no doubt stretched forth his succouring hand, when all human aid must have failed; and sent

forth

forth his lightnings and his storms, to form a rampart round the innocent!"

The exhausted Hubert then reclined his feeble frame against the altar, to recover strength to proceed; and Angela, pressing her kind friend's hand, in a whisper intreated leave to reveal herself to the suffering man. An assenting look encouraged her, and kneeling down by him,

"Father Uberto," said she, in a tremulous voice, "I am Angela, Julius di Valdenza's daughter, whom you saved from a doom much worse than death!—Look on me, good father, and from my lips accept that pardon my father, I am sure, would not withhold." She then pressed his palsied hands between her own, and continued to pour the accents of consolation into his aching heart. Hubert replied not; but after some moments of extreme pertrubation, he burst into tears, and wringing his hands in agony, sobbed aloud:

"It is too much!—too much!" How have I deserved the visitation of angels in my dying hours! *I*, wretch that I am, who have poured the

full vial of destruction on the heads of those who cherished me! My time is short," continued he, after a pause of some minutes,——"my time is short; the little which remains, let me employ for the benefit of those I have so grossly injured. Roberto's wound was not mortal; a few hours repose enabled him to crawl to the castle, where telling his employer he had received it in trying to prevent the escape of the devoted victim; he added, that as they had embarked a very short time before the tempest raged, they had no doubt been swallowed up in the foaming billows. The count was then extremely agitated from the effects of the dreadful storm, which had been particularly felt at the castle and its environs; and too much hurried in preparing for his own departure, to attend to Robert, who was suffered to depart without much interrogation.

"This young lady has no doubt informed you of their embarking in disguise: Roberto saw them descend to the beach, and found means to engage the captain of the vessel to take him on-board. He there ingratiated himself into his injured lord's favour by his assiduity

duity, and was suffered to attend him on his journey. He was many times on the point of throwing himself at his feet, and imploring his pardon; but his resolution as often failed, and he determined to remain with his master, and to guard him with his life. His alarmed conscience continually smote him, and he sometimes fancied his master knew, and was on the point of taxing him with the enormity of his crimes. One night particularly, his looks, his language, all convinced Roberto he was discovered; and impelled by remorse and fear, he fled.

"These events have lately only come to my knowledge: I was commissioned to attend a dying man at a poor cabin not very distant. As he poured into my ear a detail of crimes, which so nearly interested those whom I have a solemn oath in heaven to protect, my own conscience bled afresh; and laying open my guilty soul to this companion in wickedness, we wept our sins together. He expired in my arms, after my solemnly promising to convey to our injured benefactress, the tidings of her brother's existence.

" Despairing of being of any service to my lady, or donna Rosalia, after her fatal marriage—the horror of having been, perhaps, accessary to young Toranci's death, whose love had made him tempt all danger in the hope of seeing her—my mind a prey to a thousand terrors, and not daring to meet the frowns and just reproaches of don Alfonso, nor brave the spectre, which always seemed to haunt my steps, after that awful night—I fled, and sought this secluded spot.

" Knowing the duke possessed the gloomy castle in its neighbourhood, which report named as the scene of many an outrage, my fears often led me to the place; and as I wandered round, I endeavoured to discover whether any fresh victim was then immured within its guilty walls.

" Chance one evening carried me thither at the instant of the draw-bridge being lowered: my suspicions were then raised, and no night passed without my wandering round the dismal walls. I longed to go in search of the baron de Roviego, and warn him of his danger; but dreading

dreading to leave a spot which was perhaps donna Rosalia's prison, and probably her tomb, I delayed my journey; for my first duty was to her, and obliged me to defer every other concern, till her safety was insured.

"One night I saw and spoke to her, and strongly urged her seeking refuge in this convent, till proper methods could be taken for her safety: but my persuasions were unavailable; donna Rosalia's virtue was proof against her sufferings, and she determined to abide, in all its severity, by the forced vow which bound her to a cruel husband, and from his hand only accept of liberty."

Hubert here ceased speaking. After a pause of some moments, Angela broke the silence, to inquire whether Sebastian, her father's friend and servant, had not been named by Robert.

"Yes, young lady," replied he: "Sebastian was decoyed from his home almost before his wounds were healed, by a pretended letter from his lord; and eager to obey the summons, he hastened to the appointed place, first placing Agnes, by her earnest desire, in a neighbouring monastery.

monastery. He was trepanned on board a ship, and sold to the owner of a Moorish vessel, who carried him into Tunis."

"Good Heaven! our faithful, kind Sebastian is a slave! He to whose generous attachment and prudent care my dear father owes more than life! My second parent, my friend, my mother's deliverer, and my own!" Angela, unable to suppress her grief, here wept bitterly.

"I hope, dear lady, his misfortunes are by now ended: I learned also from Roberto, he had a son educated at Padua. To him, according to my promise to Roberto on his death-bed, I wrote the account of his father's slavery: my letter was anonymous, it is true; but a good son, in such a moment, would not deliberate, but fly to his parent's rescue.

"The particulars of these events, and all the circumstances of my worthless life, that have any connection with my lord's much-injured family, are related in a paper signed and sealed, and addressed to my lady the countess, to be delivered to *her only*, after my decease,

by

by a brother of our order, who has solemnly promised to fulfil my request. At the time of its being written, false shame still made me cling to reputation; and the applause bestowed by my fellow men, devoted like me to solitude, for my seemingly exemplary piety, still flattered my corrupted heart: but the sight of this suffering angel once more awoke all the pangs of remorse, and deploring my crimes with unfeigned and penitential sorrow, I have been permitted to acquire strength to conquer my hypocrisy, and humbled in the dust, to lay open its inward recesses to the view of those whose approbation I had been so anxious to obtain; and bear that opprobrium and contempt, which all good men must feel for such a wretch as I am!

" Humbly do I thank Him whose precepts I have so often broken, for having granted me length of life enough to deplore my manifold sins; and to receive pardon from the sainted lips of her I have so frequently, so greatly injured. Oh! may the other victims of fraud and villainy be saved by an Omnipotent Hand

 from

from the hidden snares of the depraved of heart!"

During this interview with the wretched Hubert, many had been the tears shed by the unfortunate countess: her heart was strongly affected by the recollection of those joyous scenes which gilt her morn of life, and the subsequent sudden clouds, which obscuring the brilliant prospect, had burst in storms on her devoted head.

Angela, whose youthful heart was alive to all the emotions of sensibility, wept also, partly at a relation of sorrows in which she bore a share, and more at those which had so cruelly wounded the bosom of her second mother.

From this time, the most marked respect and attention was paid by the abbess and her community to their injured prisoner; and Angela, instead of being refused the pleasure of her society, was even permitted to have the adjoining cell, and every indulgence which could render their retirement agreeable.

The penitent Hubert lingered some days longer; when feeling the pangs of dissolution approach,

approach, he was, at his own request, carried into the chapel, where, by the piety of his death, he afforded an exemplary lesson to all present, of pious resignation, and a truly contrite heart; thus atoning, in some degree, for the turpitude of his past life.

CHAP. X.

ROSALIA, whom we left in the gloomy mansion with the interesting guest, whom her courage and prudence had saved from death, after his interesting narrative longed to throw herself at his feet, and ask his blessing. Several times she tried to speak, and as often the sound died upon her tongue, lest, however much circumstances might persuade her of their relationship, the explanation should disappoint her hopes.

"Lusinval is, no doubt, Alvermo!" said she. She shuddered, and endeavoured to compose her agitated spirits. At length, unable any longer to suppress the extreme emotion which had seized her, she interrupted his abstracted reverie, by inquiring whether he had ever noticed the castle on the northern cliff.

"There," continued she, "I passed the dreadful night of the tempest you mentioned, in company with my beloved mother, lamenting the absence of an only brother, whom we feared had perished in the storm."

He arose and looked earnestly at her.

"Then, lady, you are not the duke d'Alvermo's daughter?"

"No," said Rosalia, in a faultering accent.

"You cannot be his wife!"

Rosalia replied not.

Clasping his hands together, he remained silently gazing on her during some minutes; then resumed, "Angelic woman! whose virtue renders you calm though in the den of lions; I fear my narrative has drawn drops of blood from your gentle heart! Here ends my desire of vengeance on Alvermo. Thy virtues must, they will reclaim him; and in whatever fatal gulf of vice his errors may yet plunge him—he will die blessing thee!"

Rosalia sighed deeply, and fixing her eyes on her guest, said, "I am Angela di Valdenza's daughter! Ah!—I am not deceived—

 you

you are Julius,—my mother's beloved brother—my long lost uncle!"

The first emotions of surprise and joy passed, an explanation took place on both sides. Rosalia, from delicacy towards her father, passed lightly over his crimes; but Valdenza, whose knowledge of mankind had taught him the painful lesson of suspicion, heard more than met the ear, and truth sprung forcibly to his mind. He discovered, in the machinations of Rialves, some of those he had imputed to Alvermo; and mentally returned thanks to that Providence which had saved him from the snare he had almost courted.

Rosalia also informed him of her acquaintance with signora di Toranci; and by her backwardness in speaking of Raimond, and her blushes on his naming him as the husband he had chosen for Angela, he clearly perceived the cause of her embarrassment, and forbore to talk of him.

That and several successive days passed in mutual confidence. Roviego could not sufficiently admire the beauty, grace, and virtue of his niece; and Rosalia, in her newly discovered

covered relative, found a virtuous and able counsellor.

Certain of his daughter's safety, he refused to quit the castle, and insisted on remaining to receive Alvermo when he should arrive, that he might openly defend his niece, if necessary. The duke's long absence at length excited Rosalia's surprise. She began to apprehend he had condemned her to linger out her life in that dreary solitude, and strongly urged her uncle to depart.

"You only," said she, "can give me tidings of my beloved mother. How great must be your wish to embrace her after so long an absence! Think of her joy at seeing you! of her pleasure at hearing I am well! You will also embrace Alfonso, my dear brother, whom you will find deserving your best affection. My mother has great influence—she once had unbounded power over Alvermo's mind—her persuasive voice will teach him to be less unjust towards her daughter, whose duty dooms her to remain a prisoner here, till her husband's order sets her free. My poor Beatrice, too, her

her attachment merits another reward, than to be immured within this gloomy mansion."

The baron's objections to depart at length yielded to Rosalia's reiterated entreaties, and the following morning was fixed for his quitting the castle. Tenderly blessing and embracing Rosalia, they descended together; when demanding the keys with an air of authority from the daughter of her jailor, she opened the gates, and bade him farewel.

Rosalia had been emboldened to adopt this measure, from the change that had happened in her prison. The wretched man who had been employed in this office by Pedro, died in consequence of his fall during his state of inebriety. His wife had, from that date, lain dangerously ill, the effect of his inhuman treatment: the daughter alone now attended on Rosalia; and though herself the victim of Pedro's licentiousness, her mind retained much of its former purity. As soon as she perceived herself at liberty to act, she advanced towards Rosalia, and falling at her feet, wept, and confessed her unworthiness; at the same time assuring her of her entire devotion to her ser-

vice.

vice. As an earnest of her sincerity, she gave her a slip of paper, which a good monk, who attended her father on his death bed, had confided to her, with injunctions to deliver it as soon as possible.

This monk was father Hubert: his solemn admonitions had reached her sinful, but not corrupted heart, and turned her from vice to the love of virtue. The scroll only said,

"Your young protegee is safe within the walls of the neighbouring monastery. Oh! that I could prevail on you to quit your prison for the same asylum!"

Valdenza, on arriving at the convent, enjoyed the double pleasure of embracing a long-lost sister, and a beloved child. The day was spent in decent joy, and mutual congratulations; and the countess, though grieved at Rosalia's imprisonment, yet rejoiced that such trials had only made the virtues of her heart shine the brighter, like gold seven times refined in the furnace.

"Were I but certain of Alfonso's safety," said she, "I should be comparatively happy! Comparatively! did I say? Ungrateful mortal!

tal! Ah! I am much happier than I had ever ventured to hope on earth!"

Angela, as soon as she found herself alone with her father, did not fail to inform him of Hubert's narrative, and thus put him on his guard against Rialves, whom he now discovered to have been as great an enemy to his peace as the duke d'Alvermo himself.

After spending two days in the society of objects so dear to his heart, Valdenza tenderly bade them adieu, promising to return as speedily as possible with a nephew he longed to embrace. The abbess and several ladies of the convent were their guests the second day, to whom he expressed his warmest thanks and gratitude for having afforded so secure and honourable an asylum to his daughter; and also paid them some delicate compliments on their discernment, in discovering the countess's intrinsic merit under so injurious a disguise.

Early on the third morning he began his journey, intending to proceed with as much speed as possible to Nice, to embrace his early friend; and also in the hope of finding Alfonso an inmate of her peaceful dwelling:

after which his grateful heart proposed finding a means of emancipating his faithful servant, whose attachment to him had involved him in such great distress—and going in person to Alvermo, plead for his injured niece, and should his application fail, to seek redress by presenting a petition to his sovereign, stating the iniquity of these proceedings, and throw himself on his mercy.

CHAP. XI.

AFTER the baron's departure, Rosalia spent the eight succeeding days in much inquietude. Her mind had lost that vigour which had till then supported her. The curiosity which on entering the castle had occupied her thoughts, had been fully satisfied; and the hope of speedy liberation from her gloomy prison, had now given place to the apprehension of lingering out her existence there.

She dwelled on the merit and virtues of her newly-discovered relatives, and regretted being separated from them. Her mother's unknown fate also distressed her—her poor brother too—the recollection of the count's severity, and Alfonso's noble spirit, made her shudder for him, especially when the remembrance of her own wrongs

crossed

crossed her mind; and giving way to these melancholy reflections, her health became enfeebled, and her slumbers agitated.

Towards the evening of the ninth day, Rosalia and her faithful affectionate attendant were hastily recalled from the picture gallery in which they were wandering, by a loud summons for admittance at the outward gate. Rosalia immediately fastened the door of her apartment, and sunk into a chair, overcome between the emotions of hope and fear.

Shortly after, the young female gently tapped at her door, and entreated admittance. Rosalia, almost breathless, pointed to Beatrice to open it.

" Madam," said the girl, curtsying to the ground, there is a signor below, who says he must see you immediately. Says I, ' Signor, I can't let you in, till I inform my lady the duchess'.

She then waited Rosalia's commands, who recovering strength enough to speak, in a faultering voice desired him to be admitted. A few minutes introduced a stranger of very respectable appearance; who having, at Rosalia's

request,

request, seated himself, after a few moments hesitation said,

"I have the honour to address the duchess d'Alvermo, a lady whose virtues must ever render her an object of respect to every feeling heart."

The stranger again hesitated, and fixed his eyes on Rosalia, whose interesting countenance discovered a variety of emotions.

"Speak, sir," said she; "your faultering tone alarms me!"

"I am the bearer of a letter from the duke," resumed he, "who is anxious to embrace and implore forgiveness of a much-injured wife." At the same time presenting her a letter, she tremblingly broke the seal and read—

"Beloved Rosalia!

"Hasten to me—let me from those lips, that have so often spoken peace to my restless mind, receive a pardon for my crimes! The person who carries this, is one in whom I can indeed confide, since I trust him with my dearest treasure.

"Come,

"Come, sweet Rosalia! come, and receive the last embrace of thy unworthy, thy repenting husband,

"D'ALVERMO."

The paper dropped from her hand. Often had her heart bled at her husband's cruelty and injustice; yet her sanguine, youthful mind indulged the hope, that his affection would once more revive: and she even flattered herself he would quit the paths of vice, and seek those of virtue. In this moment, the depravity of heart he had too clearly evinced, vanished—the guilty Alvermo died in her memory, and she saw only her husband, expiring in agony and remorse.

The stranger observing the agitation she experienced, in words of pious consolation endeavoured to revive her spirits, and in delicate language urged the necessity of her immediate departure, as the duke's impatience to be reunited to her might increase his fever, which was already alarming.

Beatrice, whose joy, at seeing her deliverance near, was too great to attend to her lady's

present

present anxiety, in ecstasy reminded her, she would soon have the happiness of seeing the countess and don Alfonso, and all the friends she so dearly loved! Then quitting the room, she hastened to prepare for their departure.

A quarter of an hour after his arrival, the stranger found himself seated in the carriage, which had conveyed him to Malvocio, with Rosalia, and on his return to Naples.

Scarcely had they turned the angle leading from the castle, ere they were joined by four armed men to guard them on their way. On observing this reinforcement, a usual convoy through countries exposed to the ravages of banditti, Rosalia felt a degree of suspicion enter her mind.

"Have I been prudent," said she mentally, "in confiding to this stranger, however respectable his demeanour? But surely 'tis Alvermo's writing."

She looked towards the convent in the wood. "I have a very dear relative in yonder monastery," sighed she: "if it would not detain

us too long, I should like to go thither, and embrace her on our way."

"Certainly," replied the stranger; "it is almost in the road:" and immediately gave orders to proceed thither.

Rosalia's suspicions instantly gave place to implicit confidence. They arrived: the abbess received her guest with urbanity, and gave orders for her young pensioner's immediate attendance. Angela hastened to the parlour, but on beholding Rosalia, gave a shriek of joy, run back, and returning with the delighted countess, threw herself into her arms.

A few minutes spread the glad tidings through the convent, when the attentive abbess returned, apologized for her intrusion, and invited the duchess to enter the convent; adding, "that the interior gate stood open for her reception."

Rosalia excused herself from accepting the intended honour at that time; and putting Alvermo's letter into her mother's hand, expressed her earnest wish that she could accompany her.

"You," continued she, "who have such unbounded influence over my poor Alvermo's mind, what might you not effect at such a crisis!"

The

The countess gave the letter into the abbess's hand, who refusing to peruse it, replied,

"You, madam, are the arbiter of your own actions. My regret during your absence will be great; but I and my community are too much indebted to your virtues, not to sacrifice our wishes to yours."

The stranger, who had been requested to quit the carriage, now joined them, and expressed his pleasure at this unexpected meeting. Rosalia entered the convent for a a few moments, while the countess was equipped for the journey, and in a very short space they were on their road to Naples.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

THE duke d'Alvermo, at the time he quitted Rosalia, enraged at Angela's escape, determined to pursue her without loss of time; hoping, from the short space that had elapsed from her flight, and her being unattended, to find her wandering among the intricacies of the neighbouring forest, and seeking an asylum with the few inhabitants who dwelled in its vicinity.

Pedro, whom his lord cursed for his negligence, and even taxed with treachery, felt the present moment was no time to trifle with his rage; and knowing his choloric disposition, he dreaded its fatal effect, and sought, by his alacrity and attention, to compensate for his late disappointment. He learned from a wood-cutter, that he had seen a young female,

that very morning, enter the adjoining forest, and had tried to overtake her; "but as she went so fast, he thought she might not be a human woman, though she seemed so, knowing that evil spirits were abroad."

This account filled Alvermo with new hopes of soon regaining his victim; but disappointment only, after a long and eager search, repaid his toil. He vented curses upon her, and swore to be revenged. Pedro's execrations even surpassed his own; and this wily servant, acquiring an ascendency over his master's mind in proportion to the abatement of his fury, insinuated, by degrees, the necessity of his seeking that society which would alleviate his sorrow.

The duke, gloomy, and still meditating deeds of vengeance against his innocent victim, and unfortunate wife, whom he suspected of having discovered, and protected her, at length suffered himself to be persuaded to go for a while to Naples, to drown his cares. Thither he repaired, and, in the society of a few choice companions, spending the hours in gaming and every lawless pursuit, the joyless

days

days rolled on, unmindful of his wife's captivity, except to execrate her whom he had ceased to love, but could not cease to esteem; and wishing her less blameless, that he might crush her with an appearance of justice. There were moments of lassitude, indeed, when left to reflection, Rosalia's image would stand before him robed in innocence and beauty, and woo him to be happy; but this rising contrition as often vanished, as Pedro, the purveyor of his lord's pleasures, started new game to his view; while he took special care to improve the returning influence he once feared he had lost for ever, but had unexpectedly recovered, by discovering the residence of the baron di Roviego, and his beauteous daughter, and promising to entrap the latter, which the preceding narrative has sufficiently proved he accomplished.

As soon as the marchesa de Bramante found that Rosalia was indeed duchessa d'Alvermo, her grief and rage knew no bounds. Become the secret ridicule of her acquaintance, the dupe of a man she loved, and believed her adorer, her health sunk beneath the conflicting emotions of

her soul. Wealth, beauty, power, rank, all lost their charms, one only passion took possession of her breast—*revenge.* And quitting the crowded city and admiring throng, she retired to a charming retreat a few miles distant, hoping to invigorate her drooping health and spirits by the change of scene, and in retirement to forget her sorrow; but experience soon taught her the painful lesson, that "solitude is the nurse of woe;" and instead of regaining peace of mind, she daily suffered increasing anxiety, and became a prey to langour and chagrin.

Her favourite attendant, whom interest alone had induced to follow her, still corresponded with a favoured lover at Naples, from whom she learned the changes which occurred. From this woman the unhappy donna Julia heard that Alvermo was at Naples. Instantly her resolve of going there was fixed. She determined to see him, and overwhelm him with disdain. In the evening her orders to depart were given; and the evening of the following day beheld her shining in all the splendour and attraction

attraction of the once gay and lovely marchesa di Bramante.

The duke d'Alvermo was present. Something like a painful sensation smote him, as with a haughty and disdainful glance, she passed him to gain the seat allotted her. Her beauty was commanding: the inward fire that consumed her frame, gave lustre to her eye, and dignity to her post; and the rapture with which she was received by the society in which she had always shone a star of the first magnitude, added brilliancy to her wit and conversation.

Alvermo beheld her with surprise mixed with admiration: after a short interval of irresolution, his native temerity, augmented by frequent success, returned; and advancing towards her, he attempted to take her hand, at the same time lamenting, "that fate had been so long his foe, as to forbid his gazing on such resplendent charms."

The marchesa hastily withdrew her hand, looked at him with a vacant stare, laughed contemptuously—talked very loud to a nobleman near her; and for the rest of the evening appeared to forget, even his existence.

The duke, instead of resorting to the society of his lawless companions, retired to bed. Rosalia was forgotten—the haughty widow alone occupied his thought. "Her wit was so piquant—her beauty so animated—her disdain also was a charm—perhaps the greatest of them all. Could he conquer that haughty spirit, what a victory!—It was worth a thousand common adventures!—She once loved him, fondly loved him! and would no vows, no tears, melt the heart that love had touched! Oh, yes! her hatred must be counterfeited!" The night was sleepless—many projects passed through his inventive brain, but all t oo extravagant to succeed; and after confiding the nature of his lucrubations to his insidious agent in the morning, he dispatched him with orders to ingratiate himself with her attendant, and pave the way for his admittance.

Pedro smiled malignantly at this injunction, and promised his lord a speedy accomplishment of all his wishes.

The seemingly happy, though, in fact, wretched marchesa, on quitting the party had entered her carriage, her heart, torn with anguish

guish and despair. The false spirits which had charmed her admiring friends, were changed to sighs and tears; her heaving bosom, parched with love, and thirsting for revenge, in vain sought the balm of rest; [illegible] on her sleepless pillow, passing in review the wrongs she had sustained, her wounded love and pride rose by turns to her fevered brain, and alternately pleaded for the insiduous betrayer, and condemned him to the punishment a slighted passion merited.

Pedro, faithful to a promise which opened a new road to his avarice and propensity to evil, sought the complying damsel, whom he also had treacherously ensnared and forsaken. Some glittering trinkets first engaged her attention, and vows and protestations of repentance and eternal fidelity, soon obtained her pardon. From this abandoned woman the wily agent learned the secret of her mistress's real state of mind; her grief and despair at the duke's marriage, and sudden resolution to return to Naples on hearing of his being there.

The agreement was soon arranged between these partners in iniquity; and Alvermo was,

through the medium of this abigail, to be again introduced into the marchesa's presence; "who," the worthless confident added, "she was sure would rejoice in the quarrel being made up, for she could not live without him."

Pedro returned, succeeding even beyond his most daring hopes, and hastened with these joyful tidings to his lord, whose mind almost in the same moment buoyed by hope, and sinking with despair, had already suffered all the pangs of impatience at his long absence.

With the confidence of being received, his natural vanity returned in full force—He decorated his person with uncommon care, and, with that effrontery which had often served him in his lawless pursuits, he repaired to the abode of the injured widow; and her attendant, apprised of his intention by Pedro, ventured, knowing her lady's sentiments in his favour, to introduce him into her presence.

The marchesa, unlike the sprightly creature of the preceding evening, sat with her head reclining on her hand in mournful meditation. On seeing Alvermo, she rose haughtily, and would have left the room; but throwing him-

self

self before her path, and [redacted] seizing her hand, notwithstanding her efforts to the contrary, he forcibly detained her, while, in self-accusing terms, and shedding abundance of contrite tears, he endeavoured to deprecate her anger.

Her feelings were strongly excited, and, after an ineffectual struggle to disembarras her hand, she sunk on a sofa, almost suffocated with the contending emotions of rage and grief.

The duke now thinking his conquest sure, pressed her hands to his lips, as he still kneeled before her, and in rapturous expressions, poured forth the adulatory language in which long practice had made him an adept.

The marchesa, after some moments, recovered sufficiently to speak, when loading him with reproaches, and the most insulting scorn, she again commanded his absence, and rose to depart; but Alvermo, who was not to be baffled in any object he had in view, redoubled his ardour, and swore to die at her feet unless her beauteous lips pronounced his pardon.

Laughing hysterically at his sallies, she resumed her elevated spirits of the preceding

evening, rallying him on the fervency of his passion, especially his unalterable *constancy*, with such force of eloquence, mixed with poignant wit and bitter sarcasm, that he stood amazed. Her delightful vivacity had new charms, as it afforded him fresh arms to combat her disdain; and endeavouring to improve the favourable moment, he even ventured to intreat her to admit him an evening guest, as formerly.

At this instance of his temerity, donna Julia gave him a glance of indignation: suddenly passed him, and quitted the apartment.

Alvermo remained some time walking backwards and forwards in expectation of her return; at length, finding his hopes vain, he sat down at her scrutoire, on which lay paper, pen and ink, and wrote an enraptured sonnet to her beauty, wit, and talents, in which he condemned himself to the most cruel, yet pleasing death:—"mortal wounds inflicted by her killing frowns."

The following day conveyed several of these extravagant billets; and the duke, determined to persevere, adhered to his plan with the greatest

greatest pertinacity, "insisting he could exculpate his conduct—deploring her unjust anger; and demanding an interview which was to raise his soul to the highest pitch of earthly bliss, since he should hear the loveliest of lips pronounce his pardon."

Pedro, at length, carried the welcome permission. The marchesa invited him to a tête-a-tête supper.

Delight sat on Alvermo's brow.

"Woman," exclaimed he, "weak woman! how easily caught, betrayed, entrapped again!"

Exulting in the success of his artifice, he prepared for the delightful moment, and already smiled at the eclat of a conquest which would class his name among the first of successful villains, and debase her whose ruin he meditated, to the lowest level of female folly.

Donna Julia received him with smiles, and replied to his compliments with sprightliness and grace.

Every ornament which art could invent, was lavished to adorn a person that needed none, and every fascination practised to delight her lover. The supper was served with exquisite

 taste:

taste: viands which might tempt the most fastidious palate covered the table: the most costly wines sparkled in goblets of embossed gold. Wit and gallantry enlivened the repast. The marchesa surpassed herself. Alvermo, gazing on her with rapture, wondered he had not, when he could, secured her as his own. Creams, ices, and fruits of the most delicious flavour followed: the attendants withdrew.

"Duke," said she, with a bewitching smile, halving a peach, which she presented him, "remember, we are friends—to part no more!" at the same time pouring half the contents of the goblet which stood near her, into his. He caught the hand held out towards him with rapture, and, as the cup touched her's, eagerly raised his to his lips and swallowed the treacherous draught, then falling at her feet, thanked her in rapturous expressions for that cup of bliss, whose draught gave earnest of superior happiness.

She laughed convulsively—looked at him for a few moments, with a mingled emotion of pity, love, and terror.—At length, interrupted his rhapsodies by snatching his hand,

and holding it against her beating heart, she solemnly inquired,—"whether he were prepared for death?"

"We cannot *live*, but we must *die* together," added she. "Did you expect me to live the slave of foul dishonour? to bend at your nod—and live upon your smile? No—base man—you have enjoyed the sweets of love, while I have been the victim to a thousand tortures!—Now our lot is equal—We meet, to part *no more!*"—Her voice faultered—she sunk upon his bosom, as mute with astonishment and horror he continued kneeling before her—her dying arms clung round his neck, and clasped him tight:—she groaned and writhed in agony, and her convulsed eye, fixed on him, exhibited all the anguish of despair!

Alvermo, unable to tear himself from her grasp, called aloud for aid. The domestics rushing in, assisted in ungrasping her now almost rigid arms from around him, and bore her to her apartment.

One dreadful shriek reached his ear as he hastily

tily traversed the deserted hall, and struck his soul with increasing horror.

This ill-fated woman expired during the night, calling on his name, and execrating his villany. The potion she had taken was doubly potent; the dregs of the baneful draught having settled at the bottom of her cup; this, joined to the extreme agitation of her mind, had almost instantly taken effect, and even terminated her existence, ere the subtle poison had penetrated the veins of her guilty lover.

Pedro, alarmed at this catastrophe, followed the duke, and immediately sent for a physician, who, on his arrival, administered an antidote. The effect this produced was of a nature to remove the immediate apprehension of his dissolution; but the debilitated state in which he remained, threatened an approaching malady which would end in death.

The physician was signor Romero, the same who had attended Rosalia; and this benevolent and just man taking advantage of his patient's present state of mind to awake his long dormant feelings, far from flattering him with

the hope of renovated health, spoke of the possibility, nay, probability, of a very short space only, being granted him here to atone for past offences.

Alvermo, affected at the end of a woman spoiled by an improper education, and whose greatest fault, next to her dissimulation, was her love of him; and roused to recollection by the good man's solemn reflections on the harshness of his vengeance on the unfortunate Elvira, whose only error had been levity, listened with complacency, and even acknowledged his errors.

The numberless crimes of his past life rose to his mental view. Zamira's shade seemed to flit along, reproaching him with her murder. Her noble husband, the generous Valdenza, whose compassionate hand had bound up his wounds when he lay expiring beneath the sword of the justly irritated Muley Hamet, next rose to implore his mercy for his daughter whom he had sworn to destroy. He shuddered on reflecting he was perhaps a ghastly corse in the damp vaults of the castle.

For

For the first time he rejoiced in his being disappointed in his plans of evil.

"Angela," said he, "is safe. She, at least, has escaped the snare laid for her! Yes," continued he aloud, "'Tis thou, Rosalia!—woman of excellence! 'tis thou who hast found a means for her escape—Thy angelic soul, superior to the superstitious fears which enthral thy sex, directed by some guardian angel, hath discovered the secret panel concealed from me; and in the silence of the night thou hast dared to penetrate those deserted rooms; and exploring the hidden chambers that confined her, hast restored her to liberty. Poor Valdenza! would thou hadst liberated him also!"

Moved by the pious exhortations and active benevolence of his physician, he ventured to disclose to him the secret of his guilty soul; and almost kneeled in gratitude, on the good man's offering to have Rosalia conducted in safety from her prison to his arms. In him only could he confide—in vain he looked around for one real friend, to whom in this time of need he could confide the secret wish. None

appeared

appeared to whom he durst intrust Rosalia; and he who reckoned an hundred companions in his train, could not count one friend! The offer was instantly accepted. Signor Romero intrusted this commission to his brother, a man of worth, while he watched by his feeble patient.

Alvermo counted the tedious hours, and often called upon Rosalia's name. He reflected with true contrition on his injustice towards her; and promised, if life were granted him, to employ it for her happiness, and in making retribution as far as in his power, to those who had suffered by his crimes or follies.

Pedro was now become odious to his sight; for he was an hourly memento of his turpitude and crimes; and sending for this partner of his iniquities the morning after the marchesa's fatal supper, told him, that thenceforward his services could be dispensed with—in very affecting language deplored his own wickedness, and giving him a handsome sum of money for support; added some good advice respecting his future conduct.

Pedro affected much grief at leaving so kind

a master

a master, and instantly repairing to the worthless betrayer of the late unfortunate marchesa, assisted her during the confusion caused by so dreadful a catastrophe, in purloining a great part of her jewels; intending to decoy her to the coast, under the promise of embarking with her for a foreign land. So far his plan succeeded; but the soul of the wicked is suspicious. His abandoned partner suspecting his design, never ceased to watch his steps; and on perceiving herself unable to prevent his deserting her with the fruits of their mutual villany, in a paroxysm of rage, denounced him to the magistrates. The sword of justice was not tardy—this wretched woman and her infamous paramour, paid with their lives the forfeit of their repeated crimes.

CHAP. XIII.

ALVERMO sat watching the declining sun, when the carriage drove up the avenue; he sprung forward to meet his wife, but enfeebled both by bodily and mental malady, he sunk back on a seat near the entrance of the chamber.

The physician, fearing the effect of sudden emotions, had quitted him to receive them. In an instant he returned, and seeing the debilitated state of his patient, used the means necessary to restore his strength and spirits; and to his inquiring, in a tremulous voice, for Rosalia, replied, that "He had much good news in store for him, for that instead of one friend, two were arrived; but until he should acquire sufficient force of mind to receive them *rationally*, he must be content to hear they were well."

Alvermo pressed the friendly hand held out to him, and endeavoured to calm his agitation. Rosalia, who waited impatiently without the door, in a whisper begged to be admitted:— the physician instantly complied on his patient promising to be composed; and Rosalia, supported by the countess, entered and threw herself into his arms.

"This is too much, adored Rosalia!" said he, in a half suffocating voice; How have I merited this excess of tenderness? And you, madam, the most revered, the most virtuous of your sex!" bending his knee before the countess, "you also, with that angelic mind your example has infused into your daughter, deign to accompany her to the abode of treachery and guilt, to console a wretch who fled from virtue and happiness, to plunge into the vortex of infamy and torture!"

"My dear son," replied the countess, embracing him: "the paths of dishonour ever lead to misery; but favoured is he who in time perceives his error, and has the courage to turn back and begin his journey anew. Heaven may spare you to us—Most sincerely do I pray

your

your health may be restored! This salutary lesson will correct your errors; and the rest of your life be one scene of rational happiness, which you will be the better enabled to taste, by comparing it with that ignis fatuus you have so unprofitably followed. Rosalia will exert her utmost skill in contributing both towards your corporeal and mental strength; and *I*, Henriquez, as long as I am permitted to attend you, will cheerfully exert my endeavours to sooth your pains, and employ my little store of consolation for your benefit."

The subdued libertine pressed the hands of his wife and mother, which he held in his, to his lips in silent ardour, and a scalding tear, perhaps the first he had ever shed in virtue's cause, fell from his eye.

Alvermo that night, the first since his illness, slept tolerably without opiates, and the morning dawned finding him at peace with his own heart. He longed to question Rosalia on her meeting the countess, and concerning the fate of his intended victim; but as these subjects alluded to the captivity of an object he now regarded both with love and veneration, he could

could not assume courage to dwell on the hateful topic.

Rosalia only waited for an opportunity, to inform him of her newly acquired relations; but apprehensive of awaking painful retrospection, forbore to revert to circumstances in themselves so distressing.

Alvèrmo, looking tenderly at her one day, as she sat accompanying her voice with her lute, interrupted her by asking, "Whether she had ever touched the trembling strings since the eventful evening of their sailing down the Tuscan sea; when," added he, "the monster of cruelty was leading his victim"——

"Stop, Henriquez," replied she, smiling, "We are unconsciously sometimes led by an unseen hand through paths that appear to threaten calamity, to scenes of almost celestial bliss. That event you so much deplore, has been to me replete with joy;" and, added she, rising and taking his hand, "I have acknowledgments to make you, for being instrumental to a discovery which has restored two very near, and now dear relatives to my heart; my beloved mother's only brother,

brother, whom we thought dead; her counterpart in virtue, and in talents; and his lovely daughter Angela." She then related the particulars of her discovering the mystic pedestal, and the concatenation of events arising from it.

Alvermo raised his hands to heaven—a sentiment of religion for the first time reached his heart, and he mentally blessed that Omnipotent Power who rules the universe.

Rosalia was herself a stranger to the reason of her mother's inhabiting a gloomy convent; for the countess, wishing to spare her daughter's feelings, had veiled in silence her father's crimes.

Some days elapsed, during which the duke at times appeared recovering speedily, while at others, the great debility which oppressed him, seemed to threaten an early dissolution.

In one of these intervals of renovated strength, alone with his wife and mother, he thus addressed them "I know, my beloved friends, that your wishes are for my recovery; and as I contemplate the perfection I have slighted and injured, my soul lingers here! How do I wish to recall the time that is gone—

to return no more! alas! wishes are vain: I am unworthy of your affection, and it is right I pay the forfeit of my crimes. You weep, Rosalia; yet I wept not for you, when you lay an expiring victim to my barbarous jealousy.—Hear me, my love, that while I am yet able, I may make some reparation for my crimes.—I feel life's lamp is wasting fast: I tore you, Rosalia, from your dearest hopes of earthly happiness; I knew you loved Toranci—you nobly confessed your preference, and implored my pity! the pity of a tiger. Yet would I not consent to exchange the days I have passed with you, for all the world could give! thus far my repentance extends not, I confess," attempting to smile. "You blush Rosalia, yet I am not jealous—Raimond di Toranci is a noble youth, and deserves that heart, which in the wantonness of power, I tore from his more feeble grasp. His intrepidity in rushing between me and death, deserves I should remember him with gratitude and love, and amply provide for his future comforts. My fortune is small, in comparison to the inestimable treasure I mean shall devolve to him!"

"I

"I loved Toranci 'tis true," interrupted Rosalia, "but, before I was your wife. From that moment my earnest wish has been to preserve the heart you gave me; and in your happiness, I shall find mine."

"Peace, peace," said Alvermo, playfully putting his hand on her lips, "Your duty is compliance; to which add, thou shalt not interrupt thy wedded lord!"

"Dear Henriquez," said the countess, "your health is our greatest care at present, and the gloomy reveries you indulge in will defeat our aims. Rosalia has no improper wishes; her penitent husband is too dear to her not to efface every girlish fancy from her heart."

"Dearest madam, not even your eloquence shall avert my just wrath from this offending criminal: she is condemned by her lord and judge to do penance for her past offences, by bestowing her hand where her heart, I will not say *does*, but *did* reside. I have a great desire to embrace that generous young man, and ask his friendship, as well as that of his estimable mother. Where is my brother, the noble Alfonso? have I no hope of seeing him before I die?

 Write

Write to your son, dear madam, tell him the penitent Alvermo longs to embrace him: hasten his arrival, and permit me to add a few lines to your letter myself."

The countess forbore, in the presence of Rosalia, to confess her being unacquainted with his abode; but when alone with him, she expressed her fears on his account.

"You have won my affection and esteem Alvermo," continued she; "you have influence enough to serve and protect Alfonso: a mother implores your kindness in a son's behalf." She then devulged the most important secret of her life to the listening and astonished duke; and after enjoining his silence on her manifold sorrows to Rosalia, she put father Hubert's manuscript into his hand: "In my children's happiness," said she, "I have always found mine; no sacrifice has been too great to insure their peace and welfare! Alfonso has a noble mind, but he is incautious; and I tremble for his safety! I am sure his suspicions are raised from the time of our sudden visit to Roviego. I can confide in the fidelity of old Jerome: but should

should my son attempt to seek an explanation with the count—Heavens ! I shudder for the consequence !"

The entrance of Rosalia put an end to a conversation which had filled the duke with sentiments of horror against Rialves, and of pity and veneration towards his exemplary wife. He shed a tear on her hand, as he raised it to his lips, and mentally swore to avenge her wrongs.

Early the following morning he dispatched a person, recommended by the worthy physician for his fidelity, with letters to Alfonso and his friends, intreating their immediate attendance, to receive the last embrace of a man whose race on earth was nearly run.

The messenger was ordered to first repair to Salerno; from thence, should he hear no tidings of either, to Nice, with full directions to lose no opportunity of inquiring on the road; but on no account to deliver the packets, except to those persons to whom they were addressed.

CHAP. XIV.

ALFONSO, on obtaining the count's leave to travel after Rosalia's marriage, had immediately quitted Naples, and attended by his faithful Bertram, repaired to the modest dwelling of signora Toranci, to whom he was yet a stranger, but depending on the introduction of his old friend and schoolmate for a sincere welcome.

His disappointment was consequently very great on finding them absent; and still more so, on hearing from the domestic who was left in charge of the house, that Raimond's health, which was daily declining, required a change of scene; and that her mistress was gone with him, but she knew not where—only, that she did not expect them for some months.

During Alfonso's agitation on his sister's account, he scarcely remembered the lovely stranger

stranger he had seen in the Sicilian cavern: but now the fatal die was cast, and all his exertion incapable of changing her doom. After some fruitless regrets for his absence at that period, and deploring the sorrows she might possibly experience with a man so little formed to insure her happiness, his thoughts insensibly reverted towards the object who had so entirely charmed his senses; and as he reflected on her fortitude of mind, her filial piety, her engaging sweetness, her youth and beauty, Angela, far from suffering by absence, was adorned with numberless imaginary charms, easy for a lover to lend to the object of his first and ardent affection.

During the short interval he had spent with the countess, the painful occasion which drew him there had effectually driven every other idea from his mind: and had it been otherwise, it is scarcely probable he would have immediately confessed his passion for a stranger, of whose name and circumstances he was entirely ignorant.

Soon after quitting Alvermo's mansion, he formed the plan of travelling in search of the

friends he had so suddenly made and lost; and in this intention immediately visited his schoolmate's abode, to engage him to accompany him. Disappointed at his absence, and afflicted at the cause, which he had no doubt originated with Rosalia, he refused the hospitality the old domestic offered, and pensively continued his journey, unconscious of having fixed no plan for his future destination, till Bertram respectfully inquired whither they were going.

This question roused Alfonso from his reverie, and disclosing his intention with an account of the adventure that had so much interested his feelings, he consulted him on the mode most likely to succeed.

They visited in turn all those hamlets which seemed a proper retreat for persons anxious for concealment. The beautiful banks of the Genevan lake were not forgotten among the variety and sublimity of Switzerland; and there chance conducted them to the deserted abode. Alfonso felt he had discovered the objects of his search, as the inmates of a decent cottage in which he had fixed his residence, descanted on

the beauty and charity of the youthful Angela, and the benevolence of the owner of the mansion, and his steward. Tears even filled their eyes, while they lamented their absence in language evidently springing from the heart.

"Why," said the youth, "did they leave so sweet a place? Will they be long away?"

"Ah! monsieur, no one knows! We ought not to prate of our betters, considering they have enemies too," replied the mother of the cottage. "Nobody deserves them less, I'm sure; for young and old, sick and poor, *all* owe them something—but good people, they say, are always the worst off, because the wicked envy them.—And so, as I was saying, it is no business of ours to pry into other people's business. Monsieur, you don't look as if you meant any harm; and I suppose even, you know the family, as you are so concerned about them."

Alfonso assured them, that was the truth.

"Yes, yes, it is easily seen in your countenance.—So, as I was saying, the old gentleman came back alone without ma'amselle—

 and,

and, poor gentleman! he was in a most piteous taking at finding his house all alone, without a soul in it; because you see he had left Mr. Sebastian and ma'amselle Agnes to take care of it, and two or three servants besides. Ma'amselle Agnes was a good pretty young body, as ever you'd wish to see, that Mr. Sebastian was very fond of. Some people indeed say, only I don't think there's a word of truth in it, that Mr. Sebastian and she are gone off together; but I'm of opinion," looking significantly at Alfonso, and nodding her head, "that some folks could tell another tale."

"What folks do you mean?"

"Why, monsieur, those who used to be lurking about here, and could never give a good account of themselves."

"Is it long since monsieur de Sanval has been absent?"

"Oh yes! some months in all.—And so you see, he sent for the servants he had left, but they could not be found, because they had got other places: but, says I, monsieur, I know M. Sebastian discharged them, because one of them told me so after he was gone, and

even said he had given them all a present, to make them amends."

Alfonso passed a month, wandering along the banks of the lake, and visiting the beautiful and sublime scenery in its vicinity: he pursued his journey no farther, but contented himself with dwelling near the spot.

At length, however, recollecting that his visible anxiety concerning the stranger and his daughter might raise suspicion in the minds of the rustics, and ashamed of being found a loitering spy should they arrive, he determined to tear himself from a scene in itself lovely, but rendered doubly so, as being the habitation of the mistress of his affections. He reflected also on his unfortunate lot, in having a father whom he was conscious would never consent to his union with modest worth—the abode appearing, such as to mark its owner too independent to fear the scorn of greatness; but possessing no share of those titles and wealth which he knew were the count's idols.

He quitted his friendly hosts, with many acknowledgments for their hospitality, and re-

ceived in his turn their blessings, and those of the neighbouring poor. Thus bidding farewel to these lovely scenes, and giving a long-drawn sigh to the memory of her he loved, he once more regained the road to Nice. His friends were still absent.

Again he quitted Nice, and not knowing how to pass the time till their return, travelled on to Florence, where, mixing in the gay throng which composed its society, he hoped to conquer, or at least to dissipate the melancholy that insensibly increased, and injured his health. Here chance led him into company with his friend Montero, whose family had quitted for some time the gothic elegance of their castle, to accompany their daughter to Florence, she being on the point of marriage with a Tuscan nobleman.

Alfonso finding himself courted by this respectable family, passed some very agreeable time in their society. He saw the timid blush of love light up the modest cheek of Ellena di Montero; and the ardent glow of passion spread over the features of her lover, as he led her to the hymeneal altar; and though a sigh

would force its way on recollection of his sister's hapless fate, and probably on that of the painful disappointment which awaited his own wishes, he could still teach his heart to rejoice in another's happiness, and join in all the hilarity of the nuptial festival.

Here likewise he made some valuable acquaintances, that might on occasion serve him; and chance also informed him of monsieur de Sanval and his daughter's visit to that city—of the uncommon admiration that followed her—of the numerous offers of persons of distinguished rank, which had been made—of de Sanval's singular mode of quitting a house of high distinction on the entrance of a relative of the family, and his leaving the city in the night.

During this relation, hope and fear alternately chilled or warmed Alfonso's heart: the cautious father's unaccountable conduct pleased him—it was that of a parent, jealous to secure his child even from the possibility of danger. This, no doubt, was the secret enemy who so barbarously pursued them. A certain tremulous sensation, always inseparable from true affec-

tion, darted through his heart, and the fire of sudden jealousy flushed his cheek.

Prior to his quitting this friendly society, he had the pleasure of hearing from Bertram, that Rosalia was in good health, and happier than she had expected; that Alvermo idolized her, and that they were considered an example of conjugal love. These tidings Bertram had learned from one of his friends who lived in a Spanish family, on terms of intimacy with the duke, who had come to Italy upon business, and was returning immediately. To him it was, he had confided the letter to Beatrice, so fatal to Rosalia's health and peace.

Alfonso did not forget his promise of passing some time with his sister the beginning of her second married year; but he remembered also, that when he quitted his mother's presence at the time of Rosalia's severe illness, in consequence of her forced marriage, the dagger he unconsciously drew from his bosom, had excited in her such extraordinary emotion and alarm for his safety, that he could scarcely refrain from falling at her feet, and forcing, by his entreaties and questions, a confession from her

her trembling lips; and that on acquiring sufficient strength to conceal the agitation her behaviour occasioned; while pressing his lips to her cold cheek, with the ardour of truly filial love, he had made a solemn though silent vow, never to behold her more, till he should have explored the secret recesses of his father's Sicilian castle, and discovered the cause of a conduct so inexplicable.

On visiting Nice for the third time, he found signora Toranci and her son lately returned from Madrid. The reception he received from his friend's mother was truly maternal. Folding him in her arms she wept, and her emotion became so strong as she contemplated him, that it nearly overpowered her senses.

A tincture of surprise marked Alfonso's features at this extraordinary reception; which signora Toranci observing, stilled her feelings, and recovering herself, apologized for her violent agitation, by speaking of the countess.

"She was my first, my only friend! the companion of her youth!" said she; "and the sight of her son, after so many years desiring

it

it in vain, is too much! All the happy and delightful moments of our youth rush together to my heart!"

Alfonso returned her caresses with respectful sensibility; and taking her hand, pressed it to his lips.

Raimond was absent at this meeting, but returned within an hour. His joy on thus unexpectedly recovering his friend, so long separated from him, was mixed with a variety of painful recollections; but as the emotion that attended their first embraces wore away, the conversation naturally flowed into its usual channel.

Alfonso learned from Raimond, the interview between him and Rosalia—of his ardent affection for her, and determination never to marry since she was lost to him.

"I perhaps owe father Uberto my existence," continued he: "he told me I was watched, that my life was in danger; and though not daring to enter a place set round with spies, lest your sister should suffer for my imprudence, I lingered about the walls in disguise, and received a stab from that arch villain

villain Pedro, in my arm. He, no doubt, would have dispatched me, but for the approach of a peasant, who seeing the blood gush out, hastened towards me, while the ruffian made his escape. The wound was more dangerous than I thought, — the stiletto that gave it being poisoned; and a fever coming on, obliged me to submit to keep my room. During this fatal period, fatal for ever to my peace! the honest peasant gave me all his care; which, joined to the skill and unremitted attention of a benevolent monk who dressed my wound, and possessed a sovereign balsam to extract the poison, no doubt saved my life."

Alfonso also had the pleasure of hearing Rosalia was, in all probability, happy, from signora di Toranci, who, in her son's absence, gave him a minute account of their visit to Madrid, and the service Raimond had been so fortunate as to render the duke—then spoke in raptures of Rosalia, and dwelled with pleasure on the delicate way in which Alvermo had conferred a favour which she had solicited at the court of Spain during some

months;

months; and though but an act of justice, she had solicited in vain.

A week passed thus in social intercourse, during which time signora di Toranci cautiously avoided every allusion which might awaken curiosity in Alfonso's breast; for she felt that her conversations with Rosalia, on her mother's former marriage, had been indiscreet. It was strange that her children should be kept ignorant of an event so natural to mention; yet it was evident she meant it to be secret—and it was not her wish to counteract the intention of a friend she had never ceased to love, though she in vain endeavoured to account for her estrangement.

One evening, after a day spent in friendly conversation, Alfonso ventured to introduce the real motive of his visit; but forbore to mention the place of his destination. He intimated simply, that fo some time he had intended to go a journey, but had always deferred it, in the hope that it might be agreeable to his friend to accompany him.

Raimond was much pleased with the idea, and more so at his friend's having delayed his journey

journey till his return; and his amiable mother, who already loved Alfonso with almost maternal affection, rejoiced in her son's having recovered the friend of his youth, and readily assented to a proposal which would strengthen the bond of affection between them.

Two days more were spent in this abode of peace. Alfonso and Raimond then bade signora di Toranci an affectionate adieu; but the emotion of [redacted], as he kissed her hand in the instant of taking leave, was so apparent as to alarm her.

"What is the matter, dear Alfonso?" said she tenderly.

"Farewel!" replied he in a tremulous voice —"perhaps we shall meet no more! But if not—*pity!* and do not *despise* me!" Then suddenly quitting her, he hastened to join his friend, who, unconscious of his agitation, had advanced some paces.

CHAP. XV.

ALFONSO and Raimond, attended by Bertram, turned their horses' heads towards the north, and continued their route during some hours, nearly in silence; Alfonso, almost immediately after quitting Nice, falling into a fit of musing, which Toranci forbore to interrupt; who, in his turn, let thought so much engross his faculties, as scarcely to hear Bertram's question to his master: "Whether they had not better stop at the adjoining village for the night, as they should have a forest to pass very shortly."

Bertram had long been so accustomed to these fits of absence in his lord, that on such occasions as the present, he always reminded him of the more prudent measure to follow, knowing

knowing his thoughts were too much pre-occupied to attend to the common events of life.

Alfonso apologized to Raimond for his silence, while Bertram rode up to a decent cottage, almost on the skirts of the forest, to inquire whether they could lodge there for the night; and the inhabitants, no strangers to him, since on their first journey Alfonso had made their cabin his resting place, received them with much pleasure, and hastened to accommodate them to the best of their ability.

As soon as the repast was over, and they were free from interruption, Alfonso grasping Toranci's hand, asked in a hurried tone; "Whether he were indeed his friend?" and then, in great agitation, proceeded to acquaint him with his real intention.

"Some foul deed has been committed in that neglected dwelling," continued he. "I am resolved to visit its dreary walls, and call if necessary, on the shades said to haunt its gloomy chambers, to assist my search. I tremble while I divulge my suspicions—My father has a base, unmanly soul!—He is my mother's

tyrant!

tyrant! Did he not sacrifice his child, our sweet Rosalia, to his own ambition? And to whom?—A man of blood, whose youth and manhood have been marked with dishonour! Poor victim! her fate I fear, must come!—My father! Merciful Heaven forbid!—My doom is fixed, if Rialves has stained his soul with murder! I shall not survive the dreadful certainty!—shame will haunt my pillow, and sink me to the grave!—No, beloved Angela! never shall a debased lover kneel at thy feet, and sue for thy affection! Thou shalt never know my wretched fate! I will seek the gloom of some monastic cell, and there linger out an existence that will be loathsome to me!"

Alfonso then sinking into a profound reverie, continued some time insensible to the voice of friendship. At length, yielding to the varied emotions that assailed him, he burst into tears, and as he acquired sufficient calmness to express his feelings—minutely related to the astonished Raimond, the singular events that had thus raised his suspicions, and impelled him to satisfy the strong desire of ascertaining a truth so necessary to his happiness.

Toranci seconded his friend's ardour, and solemnly promised to accompany him to Roviego, and join his endeavours, to develope this singular mystery.

Bertram was now made acquainted with their intention of visiting Sicily instead of Switzerland; who replied, that he had provided for that, and related the conversation between his father and himself, the night of father Hubert's dismay.

"My poor father said, that if he never came back (for you know my lord the count had ordered him to set off for Naples at a minute's warning), he should die blessing you. 'Bertram,' said he, looking most piteously, 'always love your young master—he is a good youth, and deserves it:—If I should die, as I believe I shall, for my heart is broken—mind you, take those keys, and give them to him—they are his.' So, signors, I took them before we set off, because, says I, who knows what might happen: and, thought I to myself, who has so good a right to them, you know."

Alfonso inquired whether Jerome had given a reason for the keys belonging to *him*.

"No,

"No, none at all; he only seemed extremely affected," was Bertram's reply.

The following morning, at break of day they measured back their steps, and regained the road leading to Italy, taking care to avoid those places where it was likely they should be detained by meeting any of their old associates; and, after as speedy a journey as circumstances would allow, travelling the whole length of Italy to the southern extremity of Calabria, lest they should be detained by contrary winds and storms at sea, the season being unfavourable for the voyage, they engaged a vessel to convey them through the Faro of Messina, and, after a very dangerous but short passage, arrived at that city; here resting for the night to recruit their exhausted strength and spirits, they hired a guard, and proceeded with all expedition to Palermo, where, dismissing their escort, they pursued their way to the castle, whose deserted chambers were the objects of their curiosity.

On arriving in the neighbourhood of the convent, and within sight of the little white dwelling, which was once the residence of worth and beauty, Alfonso proposed a visit to

good

good father Anselmo, and they agreed to lay the motive of their journey open to his view, ask his counsel, and intreat his assistance in their undertaking. This measure was instantly adopted, and repairing to the monastery, they anxiously inquired for him, but found, to their grief, he was absent on business, and might not return for some time. Thus circumstanced, Alfonso and his friend determined not to wait his arrival, which was so uncertain; but after having refreshed themselves at one of the neighbouring cabins, and recruited their weary frames by a refreshing sleep, they began their march, attended by their faithful servant, to the desolated mansion, they so anxiously wished, yet so feared to examine.

Darkness enveloped all the surrounding landscape long before they reached the castle: but they were all well armed, and too eager to arrive, to listen to Bertram's prudent advice of passing the night at some decent cabin in the neighbourhood, and rallying his caution, proceeded.

Their approach was silent and with caution, lest their design should excite the attention of the peasants,

peasants, and expose them to observation, if not danger. Bertram, who carried the heavy keys, trembled as he delivered them to Alfonso, who eagerly unlocked the padlock, pushed open the postern door, and sprung forward, followed by Toranci; while the prudent domestic, recollecting his duty, though struck with terror, hastily drew one of the inward bolts, let fall a weighty bar across the door, and joined his master, ere he had found the proper key to open the gates of the mansion itself. Unfortunately, poor Bertram, in his eagerness to enter, threw down the lantern they carried, and extinguished the light. "Never mind," said Alfonso, "among the many instruments of war that line the hall, it would be strange indeed, not to find one which will afford us a few friendly sparks." They now cautiously entered the outward hall, for almost total darkness surrounded them; the only glimmering light being that the stairs afforded, just shedding an uncertain gleam through the high windows of the gloomy place. Bertram, however, immediately recollected, that on the night of

the

the most dreadful storm he had ever known, the domestics, alarmed at the effects, and terrified at the strange yells and appearances which were reported to haunt the interior part of the castle, had all assembled here, round a blazing fire; and passed the night between fear, on account of the tempest, which shook the solid earth, and threatened destruction to the castle and its inhabitants, if not the island itself; and increased dismay, caused by the dread of meeting wandering spectres—"Visiting again the glimpses of the moon, making night hideous!"

"There is plenty of wood, I know," said Bertram, groping for a closet within the wall, "and there are steels and flints, and every thing necessary there."

"There is plenty of wine to recruit our exhausted spirits, I know," rejoined Alfonso gaily, "and thanks to the care of good old Jerome; I also know where to find it."

"I fancy the count Rualves loves the pleasures of the table too well," replied Raimond, "to have neglected the care of laying in a store of excellent provisions for the time he intended

to stay, so we shall do very well, unless, indeed, the ghosts have made free with them."

Toranci continued talking in the present strain, when suddenly a faint gleam of light shot along the sides of the wall and floor, and immediately disappeared. The astonished Toranci was instantly mute—Alfonso sighed, and Bertram dropped the wood he had now discovered, from his trembling hands, to cross himself, and invoke St. Nicholas to his aid.

This momentary fear gave place to curiosity.

"Surely it was lightning," said Alfonso, willing to account for this appearance, as he cautiously approached the door leading to the corridors and staircase, to listen. All was silent, not even the wind whispering through the long galleries, caught his ear.

"Suppose signor," said Bertram, in a faultering tone, "we leave the castle to night, and return to morrow. Old Ursulla, who used to assist when we were here, lives no great way off—you can sleep there very well, and return here in the morning."

"Peace!" said Alfonso angrily. "I fear

not

not the dead—nor shall I quit this spot till this mysterious business is unravelled; but *you* are welcome, if your cowardice surmounts your reason, to leave us here, and to seek her cottage."

"Signor," replied Bertram, boldly passing Alfonso and Toranci, "I am willing to die in your service, only command me which way to go—I will never forsake you; but my poor old father, when he ordered me to *love* you, told me also to be *prudent* for your sake, because you never thought of danger from a boy."

"Pardon my impetuosity," said Alfonso, kindly pressing the youth's hand to his heart, and drawing him back, "I have been very unjust, dear Bertram; I know you love me as a brother; but my suffering mind is so torn with contending emotions, that I scarcely am master of myself!"

"No, signor, it was not you, it was I that was to blame, not to feel how much you naturally wish to stay."

Toranci, who had retreated from the door, was employed in trying to kindle a light, and now called them to assist him. Bertram, with

alacrity, obeyed the summons, and a few minutes rewarded their exertion: the heaped wood soon kindled into flame, and they beheld themselves comfortably seated by a blazing fire.

After some deliberation, it was unanimously agreed, that they should leave the damp hall in which they were, and resort to those apartments that had been inhabited by the family during their last visit.

Alfonso lighted a torch, and led the way to the saloon. Every thing remained exactly in the same state as when he had left it the preceding year: even the table still bore the marks of their repast.

After examining the adjoining apartment, which also proved their having been unmolested by any intruder, they ascended the staircase, and entered the several chambers the family had occupied. The double apartment—his mother's rooms, which had been that he had chosen with old Jerome, when alone there, was again preferred; and Bertram, for his own accommodation, removed the bedding from a joining apartment into the countess's closet. A good fire was also kindled here, to impart as

cheerful an aspect as possible to the deserted dwelling, after which they returned to the saloon. Bertram now spread the table with the provisions he had procured on the way, and lighting a torch, said, "he was going to fetch some of the liquor deposited in the other wing of the castle" The two friends instantly sprung up, and accompanied the faithful youth to the spot. "There," said Alfonso, "pointing to a door, is the chapel, if an edifice tumbling into ruin, the habitation only of bats and owls, and loathsome insects, deserve the name. It is most true," after a pause, and approaching the door, "that a tall, majestic shade glided past the eastern window, as I stood contemplating the dreary place."

"Let us enter," replied Toranci, "let us enter; This is the solemn hour of night—What have we to fear—we will interrogate this awful visitor, and quiet its disturbed manes by promises of revenge."

As Toranci spoke he advanced with Alfonso towards the door, followed by Bertram, who endeavoured to surmount the terror that assailed him. It stood open—they entered—paused

 some

some moments, and then proceeded to examine its different parts.

"Would that father Uberto were present! he could explain, I fear, some mysterious villany transacted here, which might shake the firmest nerves! On this spot," pointing to the disjointed stones at the foot of the great altar, "I found this dagger," drawing it from his bosom—"Its point is rusty, and a name unknown to me, engraven on the hilt."

Alfonso became thoughtful; and after some minutes lingering in the chapel, returned with his companions to the saloon, and endeavoured to rally his depressed spirits during supper, but in vain; for though he joined in the conversation, and apparently invited mirth and jest, melancholy soon got the better of his assumed cheerfulness; and Toranci observing that real tranquillity was far from his friend's mind, very soon proposed their retiring for the night, that they might, after a refreshing sleep, visit all the interior apartments of this forsaken mansion; and form some plan by which to regulate their future proceedings. Sleep soon sealed the eyes of his companions; but Alfonso, whose

whose mind had been violently affected by the various events which had occurred during the preceding year, and reflecting on the old steward's terror at the vision in the chapel, which had been also palpable to his own sight; the awful stranger, whose appearance had caused such a change in the abandoned Hubert, as to turn him to repentance; and his mother's alarm at sight of the dagger, intirely banished even the thought of rest from his mind. He rose, and throwing his mantle over his shoulder, walked towards the window, where he watched some time, and listened to every breeze. A sudden thought took forcible possession of his mind. This was, to visit *alone*, at that solemn hour those apartments which appeared to conceal the mystery he so anxiously wished to develope. "If," said he, "some human being haunts this solitary place, I am armed, and am his match—if a disembodied spirit, his errand is to me, no doubt, and I ought to *seek* rather than shun this awful visitation. He turned towards his companions—they slept—then cautiously taking the keys, and treading on the point of his feet, he lighted a taper from the

 dying

dying embers of the hearth, and without the smallest noise quitted the room.

Carrying his drawn sword in his right hand he descended the stairs, left the inhabited wing, and crossed the corridor leading to the chapel, which he once more entered, and traversed—all was silent and lonely.

"Where," said Alfonso aloud, "is the sigh which seemed to break from the altar? I listen to catch the sound!—and thou, mystic form! where art thou? Deign to answer me—disclose thy wrongs, and here I swear, I will avenge them!"

No mystic form appeared to claim his promise—no sigh broke upon the silence of the night. After some minutes reflection, he quitted the chapel, turned into the gallery, and reached the door of the anti-room,—it stood a-jar—he entered.—The pictures that had before caught his attention again attracted him—He raised his taper to consider the manly form that filled the canvas. "I certainly have some where seen him," said Alfonso, sighing; and trying to recollect where. He then passed on; and with a sensation of awe removed the heavy iron bars from the doors, and proceeded to try the

the padlock. With some difficulty he turned the key in a lock so long disused, and opening the door, entered a spacious saloon nearly similar to that in the other wing, whose neat and commodious furniture, though somewhat decayed from years, shewed it had been chosen rather for use, than pomp. Nothing here detained him—he passed on to some other apartments opening on the right side to a corridor, and a staircase on the left.

Alfonso ascended the stairs and entered a suite of rooms—one particularly engaged his notice; for here the pictures he had seen in the anti-room recurred again, but portraits only; and here also several others hung—among them the venerable figure of an elderly man, richly habited in the Sicilian costume—a lady in the bloom of beauty, so resembling the countess, whose picture was next, that he imagined it with truth to be her mother's.

He now arrived at a chamber whose disordered state shewed it had been suddenly forsaken, and entered no more. The curtains of the bed were almost closed. An unusual sen-

sation seized him on drawing them back. On the farther side, under the same canopy, stood a cradle in confusion, as if an infant had just been taken thence; and on a drawer near it lay the habiliments of a child, together with a blue velvet cap and feather. Alfonso unconsciously trembled, as raising the little cap to the light, the initial Y St. A. and a coronet, embroidered in gold in front, met his view. He restored it with some palpitation to its place, and continued his examination. A young lady's robes lay scattered round the bed, and striking something with his foot, he stopped to examine it, and found it was a chain of gold, to which hung the miniature of a young man; the same he had seen in the anti-room, but in rather earlier life, blooming in manly beauty. The expression of his eye, and the smile on his rosy lip, seemed to say: "*I have sought happiness, and have not sought in vain!*" The chain was broken, and the links divided, as if by violence. "Whoe'er thou art, grateful stranger," said Alfonso, pressing the miniature to his lips, "welcome to my heart!—I will foster thee here,

here," putting it with the chain into his bosom. —"Much do I fear the thread of thy existence, like the links of this fragile chain, hath been severed by some sacrilegious hand! Ah! divulge thy wrongs, or relieve my frightful suspicions!—Give me back to life and hope; or doom me at once to misery!" All was silent—he went on, and entered a beautiful small apartment, consisting of two rooms, furnished with great taste and elegance, whose walls were decorated with paintings, and once with festoons of natural flowers; a few of whose leaves, stiffened and discoloured, still adhered to the brittle stalk. Some materials for work lay on a gilt table, and by them stood an inkstand, and a sheet of writing paper, on which a letter was began.

Alfonso, resting his taper on the table, sat down on the chair last occupied by the writer—a shivering sickness coming over him, as with an unsteady hand, he held the paper and read——

"A few days longer, my beloved, and we meet, I hope to part no more! How much

thy faithful Angela chides the lingering time that holds thee from her!—Our little cherub smiles on his happy mother, and already almost lisps thy name—My time is occupied in preparing for thy arrival: sweet flowrets, chiefly gathered by his infant hand, I have just formed into festoons to deck thy favourite chamber; that in which I first received thy vows, and gave thee mine.—The myrtle, orange, and citron trees line thy favourite walks; and they, like me, seem to revive at thy expected return. Come then, my beloved! for in thy absence thy Angela can taste no joy."

Alfonso, during his reading these lines, often stopped to recover breath—his heart palpitated. he tried to reflect; but a confusion of ideas rushed together on his mind.—He re perused the writing—it was evidently his mother's hand: he attempted to rise and open the window, but could not; for a faintness had seized his heart: a sudden dizziness benumbed his faculties, and he fell back senseless into his chair.

From this unconscious state he was relieved by the attentions of his two friends. Overcome by fatigue they had fallen asleep, but Toranci dreaming

dreaming of spectres and daggers awoke in affright, and receiving no answer from Alfonso to his calling on his name, roused Bertram, and suspecting the cause of his absence, instantly went in search of him. The unclosed doors sufficiently discovered the way he had wandered, and on observing the state into which he had fallen, Toranci immediately opened a window, and assisted Bertram to place him in the current of air, which soon had the desired effect.

On recovering, Alfonso, at their intreaties, consented to return to his chamber, and try to recruit his exhausted strength by sleep. On re-passing the door, from which he had removed the heavy padlock, he did not omit to re-place it; and Raimond, though he noticed this action, forbore to inquire its motive, nor did he ask the reasons of his late illness; but after regaining their chamber, they again retired to bed, and endeavoured once more to fall asleep: the trial, however, was vain. His friends affected at Alfonso's fainting, which they knew could proceed from no trifling cause, and alarmed at the frequent deep

sighs

sighs which escaped his labouring heart, lay silently reflecting on the circumstances most likely to have thus unmanned *him*, who from his childhood had been a stranger to fear; while the hapless youth himself unable to develope a mystery which instead of unravelling, became more perplexed, lay in agony of mind, ruminating on the chamber he had seen, and the letter he had read.

He tried to conjecture his mother's destiny in youth; for it was certain some other man than the count had possessed her affection: a slight shadow of suspicion also crossed his mind, but it was instantly dismissed. "No," said he, "my revered mother! thy soul is pure and untainted! thou hast been the *victim*, not the *slave* of deception and vice!—Could she have ever been the wife of another?—if so, why have concealed it from her children, whose affection to her, and hers to them is so unbounded? Old Jerome's terror in the chapel seemed more than that arising from merely seeing the mystic shade. Father Hubert's fear proceeded from the same vision—the good

old

old domestic's words still rung in his ears, to his question, 'Is any dishonourable deed attached to my father's name?'—'His soul never knew dishonour!" Yet count Rialves' conduct is marked with dissimulation and vice, Could it be possible that the count was not his father?—he caught at the possibility—his soul for a moment was elated; and pressing the miniature to his heart, indulged in an idea that threw him at a distance from him he could not esteem. This thought, however, he concealed within the secret recesses of his heart, and determined to prosecute the discovery further.

The early dawn was hailed by all the party, when quitting their beds, after a night of anxiety, Toranci proposed visiting the forsaken wing of the castle, as had been determined the preceding day: Alfonso was silent, his embarrassment was evident, and Raimond, who only wished to assist, not distress his friend, from a motive of delicacy forbore pressing the subject, and immediately changed the conversation to a more cheerful topic. His affected

gaiety,

gaiety, however, towards evening gave place to reflection :—Alfonso, during the day; had sought every occasion of being alone; had wandered over the trackless garden, forced his way through the luxuriant alleys, and frequently repaired to the lonely chapel, as if in search of some one he expected to meet there: but still forbore to extend his re-searches to the apartments, the preceding day he had been so anxious to examine. This change, and Alfonso's state during the night, affected Toranci, who, towards the close of evening, unable to repress his anxiety any longer, seized his friend's hand, and affectionately disclosed his apprehension ; at the same time, urging his intreaties that he would forbear in the dead of the night, to expose himself alone to similar scenes. Alfonso faintly smiled, assuring him that his illness proceeded from the association of ideas into which he had fallen, and not from any supernatural appearance: to which he added, his having earnestly invoked the no doubt, injured shade—but in vain. His burning hand, which Raimond still held in his, alarmed

alarmed him; he trembled as he observed his glowing cheek and fiery darting eye, and earnestly recommended repose: Alfonso promised, however contrary to his first intention, to abstain from all further search that night: but added, that the following he had devoted to that effect, and that no earthly power should force him to change his purpose.

CHAP. XVI.

THE following day, Alfonso's purpose was defeated by an illness which threatened his life; and his fever rose so high towards night, as to bring on delirium. The consternation of his friends was excessive, and their sorrow augmented by the singular situation in which they stood; for their inhabiting the castle was intended to remain a secret, and this unfortunate circumstance seemed destined to destroy all their plans.

Frequently, during Alfonso's ravings, Bertram intreated Toranci to suffer him to go and fetch some assistance; and Raimond, who dreaded the effects of Alfonso's fever, readily agreed to the proposal, and Bertram was

was commissioned to set off early in the morning.

Toranzi sat in mournful anxiety by his bed, watching his feverish starts, listening to his incoherent talk, and wondering at his awful and extraordinary appeals. As night advanced, his dread increased, lest his friend ere morning dawned should have breathed his last; and to conceal his feelings from the anxious inquiring eyes of Bertram, and to indulge, unobserved, the painful sensations that took possession of his soul, he quitted the chamber, and wandered through the corridor towards the chapel. A light suddenly shot athwart the ground, and disappeared: starting, he proceeded towards the eastern window, whence it seemed to come. It returned no more, but keeping his eyes steadily fixed, he perceived a palpable form glide 'round the angle of the castle.

"This," exclaimed he, "is the moment to elucidate this mystery," at the same time quickly unbarring the door, and rushing into the garden, he hastily made a way through the entangled weeds and briars obstructing his passage,

passage, and with difficulty followed the shade, as it still glided at a distance before *him*: he endeavoured to speak, but fear and surprise denied him utterance, and suddenly, when he seemed to gain upon the mysterious figure, it disappeared from his view. Toranci hurried forwards, and eagerly looking round, tried to pierce the gloom that surrounded him, but in vain—no footstep met his listening ear—no voice answered his faint and repeated calls; and after some moments passed in fearful suspence, he once more regained the chapel.

Alfonso, he found, to his great joy, had fallen asleep: his slumber, however, rather resembled a state of unconsciousness than repose; and throwing himself beside him, without communicating his discovery to Bertram, he sunk into that intense abstracted reverie, such an event was likely to create.

The morning dawned, and Bertram prepared to depart, but at Toranci's request, was prevailed on to defer it a few hours; Alfonso's sleep giving him reason to hope, that agitation had been the principal cause of his illness; and he dreaded Bertram's being seen beyond the castle

castle inclosure, lest it should defeat their designs, which he now felt doubly anxious to prosecute, the vision of the night convincing him some mystery worthy of elucidation remained to be developed.

Alfonso during several hours shewed by his feverish starts and quick-drawn breath, that his malady, though not so violent, was still alarming; but about noon he sunk into a more refreshing sleep, free from these ill-boding symptoms. Towards evening he awoke, faint and languid, but free from that feverish appearance which had so much alarmed his friends, whose joy on this occasion could be equalled only by their anxiety during his sickness. At their reiterated intreaties he deferred his intended visit to the deserted chambers for that night, at the same time declaring, that as his illness proceeded from that cause alone, until he had searched further into the mystery, repose would be a stranger to him. Toranci finding his resolution unshaken on the following morning, ventured to disclose the circumstances of his having seen and followed the spectre: his gliding away before him, as if inviting

ing his approach, and his suddenly vanishing—he then proposed their watching together.

To this Alfonso objected, saying, "That he felt the visit was to himself; that he must obey the impulse of his heart, in watching alone in the eventful chamber that had roused his feelings even unto agony." The ingenuous youth wished to lay open the secret fears and doubts to his friendly heart which filled his own: but the words died upon his tongue, where he must utter doubts that seemed to criminate his mother; and Raimond perceiving his perturbation, suppressed his feelings, and spoke of indifferent things.

During the day, the two friends endeavoured to penetrate through the entangled walks of this once luxuriant garden, and examined every walk which could admit a guest; particularly that part where the shade had, to Toranci's surprise, disappeared.

The garden was extensive, its avenues bore the marks of former grandeur, and the groves of myrtle, orange, and citron, now one undistinguished mass, drew a sigh from Alfonso, as the expression in his mother's letter recured

to

to his thoughts. The side of the castle joined a long wall, concealed from sight by the thick foliage that grew around it.

At the close of the evening, Alfonso tenderly embraced his friends; and after having once more traversed the chapel and garden, repaired to the apartments, whose padlock closed all the mysteries beyond. This time he turned into the lower rooms he had passed by before, and found that they communicated with the chapel, by a private gallery and door; and a little further to the right, discovered another small door, fastened like the former, with a strong iron bar on the inside: this he opened, and ascended a narrow spiral staircase, on the top of which was a door that stood on jar. Alfonso gently pushed it with a trembling hand, and entered.

An altar, adorned with beautiful vases of flowers, between two long stained-glass windows, occupied the middle space: on it stood a crucifix and golden chalice: embroidered stools filled the niches on each side, and on the pannels were painted whole-length figures of

of saints and martyrs. A manual lay open on the altar, Angela was written in the title page, and on the margin some devotional remarks. After examining it with care, fearing to soil the sacred page, he restored it to its place; then looking round, gazed on the tall impressive figures, till he almost fancied them animated.

Alfonso sunk on his knees at the foot of the altar, and after a few minutes, sighing deeply, rose and examined the place, and on finding no other entrance, though persuaded there must be a communication with the body of the building; he descended the staircase, pushed to the door, and repassing the apartments, ascended the great stairs, and sought the room in which he meant to pass the night.

In the bed-chamber adjoining were two doors; one, on opening it, he found communicated with a suite of apartments formerly occupied by the family, the other led to a closet containing only chests and drawers.

The oratory he had so lately quitted, dwelled on his mind; and he cautiously examined every pannel, in the hope of finding some door opening into it. The room had also several closets,

enclosed

enclosed within the wainscot, and on examining these with care, discovered that for which he searched: a bar on the inside he immediately raised, and on drawing a small bolt, the door opened at his touch, and he once more entered the oratory he so anxiously had viewed. After again examining it he re entered the chamber, gently put to the door, but purposely left it unfastened that he might return thither; and drawing the poignard from his bosom, laid it on the table, again perused his mother's letter, and was proceeding with a trembling hand to untie a packet of letters addressed to her, he had found in an open drawer, when suddenly turning, on thinking he heard a footstep approach, he struck the taper and dashed it to the ground. His first sensation was mingled with fear and irresolution; his next was to return to the apartment and rekindle the flame: the night was not far advanced; and he should find his friends, no doubt, too anxious to have retired to rest. These thoughts, however, soon gave place to others of a more exalted nature; and he determined to wait the coming of the expected mystic visitant.

Time

Time passed away—no sound reached his ear, though he frequently listened, half wishing, half fearing his approach.—At length an unusual drowsiness overpowering his senses, the effect of the langour his illness had left, he quitted the room in which he had intended to pass the night, and sought the bed in the adjoining chamber; where wrapping himself up in his mantle, he determined to wait the awful visitation, he had now taught his mind to rely on. Weariness, however, soon oppressed him, and he fell into a gentle sleep.

CHAP. XVII.

AS soon as Rialves had devoted his blameless wife to the seclusion and penance of a cloister, under the stigma of an abandoned woman, he regained the road to his abode, smiling at the success of his infernal scheme, and meditating others of a blacker die.

Instead of liberating his injured daughter, the plausible reason of his journey, he was even ignorant of her detention; for his favour with his sovereign he thought sufficient to insure her safety: Alvermo's disgrace he had effected—his final ruin he had also planned; but objects of greater moment at present occupied him. Self-gratification, the god of his idolatry, stood foremost, and every other object sunk before it.

His trusty agent had informed him secretly, almost at the instant of his departure, that

Alfonso had been seen in the neighbourhood, which had occasioned his re-entering to demand the keys, having no doubt of his proceeding to Sicily.

He now hastened back to Salerno, not with an intention of visiting his habitation, for Jerome, though old and infirm, was yet an obstacle to his designs; and perhaps to his great age, and visible decay, he had for some time been indebted for his remnant of life being spared.

Rialves had discharged his guard on entering the forest leading to the monastery; and had returned, without any other attendant than his valet, in perfect security, through a country infested by banditti, and the scene of many a midnight murder. Real courage had no share in this exploit; but the insatiable desire of executing an infernal scheme, that rose to his mind on the first intelligence he received of Alfonso having been seen near his abode.

Arrived at Roviego, his callous mind pondered on the means of executing his diabolical intent. He prowled round the mansion, in the hope of meeting the object of his hatred,

 and

and unobserved plunge the assassin's steel into his unsuspecting bosom. Alfonso came not—the shades of night fell; and Rialves, in the expectation that chance would lead him to his prey, still watched near the spot.

Midnight chimed from the convent bell—he started—soon it would be too late to do the dreadful deed.——" Should he ring, and with authority demand admittance? Alfonso was brave—his suspicions were raised. Could he appear disguised and unattended—at such an unwarrantable hour too? Besides, would that enable him to perpetrate the act he had in view? The keys of Roviego were in Alfonso's hands—he possessed *one*, indeed, a *secret key*, that once had nobly served his purpose—he would again trust to its friendly aid, and leave to chance the rest.' Once within the purlieus of the garden, he was secure: neither Alfonso nor his companions knew the secret gate—Hubert was far away—Jerome, that senseless idiot to a childish oath, would sooner die than break it. Chance might leave some neglected door unfastened, and once within the dwelling, disguised and resolute, who should arrest his

 arm?

arm! Did fate fight against him, and the youth, apprehensive of harm, have entrenched himself within its walls, he could conceal himself in the intricate labyrinth, whose mazes he well remembered, and in the face of open day dart out, and fly to his revenge; then gain the friendly secret door, and unknown and unsuspected, return to Italy!"

Often as the ruffian planned his horrid scheme, he started at the rustling breeze; and stopped to listen, as the bird of night screamed her hideous yell, as she darted on her defenceless prey. A light suddenly flashed across his path, at the instant his unsteady hand applied the key to the long disused lock. His coward heart took the alarm; and in breathless terror he fled precipitately, not even daring to turn his head, lest the bleeding corse of his murdered friend should bar his passage.

Recovered from his late alarm, the count rallied his spirits and laughed, or endeavoured to laugh at his fears.

"Ridiculous, vain offspring of Superstition!" cried he, assuming courage from desperation, and again advancing from the dark

chesnut

chesnut grove towards the door—"Avaunt!—Who protected Victor, when this firm arm plunged his own dagger in his heart!—Angela was innocent, the very soul of innocence! yet no St. Almi—no Roviego rose from their tombs to save her. The night was serene—the bright moon, attended by her numerous host of stars, looked on the glorious deed, and lighted me to conquest! But one propitious hour more, the day's my own—the rest of life delicious!"

Once more he raised the key, and with a trembling hand turned it in the secret lock—fear again crept over him, and chilled his veins. He paused, and wiped the cold dews from his forehead—then by slow degrees pushed the door, and stopped again to listen. No sound reached his ear, except the hollow moaning of the wind sweeping over the restless waves, and mingling with their sullen roar. He now passed the threshold, still holding the door in his trembling hand, irresolute whether to proceed, or to retreat. He thought he heard a sigh—a groan burst from his labouring breast—

he

he started at the sound, and some minutes elapsed ere the loud appeals of conscience could be silenced.

Suddenly closing the gate, wrapping his mantle round him, and slouching his hat more over his face, he rushed on like a maniac, neither turning his head, nor stopping till he reached the door leading from the garden to the oratory—it was fast—he clenched his fist in agony, uttered a deep and bitter curse, and tried, from the terrace on which he stood, to look into the interior of the chapel. All was involved in shadow: he turned the light side of his lantern towards the place—the door stood open.

"'Ye infernal powers, I thank ye!' said he: "This is beyond my most sanguine hopes!"—Fear at that instant fled, and revenge and thirst of blood filled his breast. His savage heart exulted, and the innocent victim lay already, in imagination, bleeding at his feet. He traversed the sacred place, passed the inner door, and arrived at the foot of the staircase. Here he deliberated, whether to ascend and examine the apartments in search of his prey, whom

whom he rightly conjectured, from a knowledge of his fearless character, and the unguarded state of the doors, had chosen that wing for the scene of his inquiry—or wait till chance should throw him in his way.

On his right hand lay the private stairs leading to the oratory: he determined to try whether fortune would again befriend him—that was his former road to conquest. He turned and raised his hand to lift the bar—it was already removed—not even a single bolt opposed his progress. Grasping his dagger, with cautious steps he ascended, entered the eventful oratory—looked with wonder and savage delight through the open door, into the chamber he once before had violated; and with a silent step, and breathless caution, lest he should alarm the vigilance of his, no doubt, watchful victim, stole on tiptoe to the scene of his former crimes.

His eye fearfully glanced round the apartment—all was silent—Death seemed to have fixed his abode in the melancholy chamber.—Half drawing his dagger from beneath his cloak, he crept towards the bed—the curtains moved.

 Terror

Terror once more resumed her empire—he started—his teeth gnashed together—with trembling haste he turned from this object of dismay, and rushed on to escape the pursuing spectres conscience had armed against him.—The form of his murdered friend barred his passage—he stood in awful majesty, his arm raised in an attitude to strike, holding the dagger, that eventful dagger, Rialves' sanguinary hand had buried in his defenceless breast. The ruffian started back—the poignard fell from his nerveless hand, and with a dreadful yell he sunk lifeless on the ground!

Alfonso, a few minutes before his entrance, had been roused from his slumber by a deep sigh, and a voice uttering his mother's name. Trembling, and breathing quick, he raised himself on his elbow, and directed his eye towards the light in the adjoining room; the curtain, half undrawn at the foot of the bed, enabling him to see distinctly into the chamber. A tall majestic figure was seated at the table he had quitted, and appeared in the act of perusing the letter which had caused him such surprise and terror.

Collecting

Collecting all his force, Alfonso prepared to address the mystic form, who laying down the paper, crossed his hands on his breast, uttering a short ejaculation, which escaped his listening ear. At that moment the midnight murderer entered to execute his dire intent—and sunk, terror struck, on beholding his murdered friend stand before him.

Alfonso now leaped from the bed, and in an instant was at the feet of this awe-inspiring figure, who regarding him with astonishment, pointed to the unconscious ruffian extended on the earth. Alfonso obeyed in trembling silence, and bending over him, stooped to raise him; but horror seized his frame, on beholding the well known though ghastly features of Rialves.

"My father!" shrieked he in agony.

"Unfortunate youth!—thy father!" sighed the stranger, after a long pause—thy mother was little below an angel!"

"Father Anselmo!" exclaimed Alfonso, rushing to his arms—"Father Anselmo, oh! be thou my parent—I renounce for ever a world in which I am destined to dishonour!

 and

and in thy quiet cloister, blessed with thy society, will I live and die!"

Anselmo pressed him to his bosom. "Son of a degenerate father," said he tenderly, "my soul flies towards thee! Look up, dear youth! thou mayst yet aspire to happiness! Thy mother's virtues will even ransom thy father's crimes!"

Alfonso pressed Anselmo's hand against his burning lips, as his scalding tears fell on it, but could find no words to express the various emotions of his soul.

"My son," resumed Anselmo, pointing to the still unconscious ruffian, "pity here demands our care—assist me to raise this wretched being, and let me, if possible, speak peace to his wounded conscience."

Alfonso shuddered, averted his eye, and turned aside—but instantly recovering himself, joined in the pious deed; and having lifted Rialves on the bed, quitted him to go in search of his companions.

They traversed the apartments together; and Alfonso, on entering the anti-room, suddenly caught

caught the monk's hand, as his eye glanced from the painting to him; and sinking on his knees, exclaimed in a faultering voice,

"If I am deceived, I die of grief!—Oh! Jerome, where art thou, to reveal the solemn secret? Why art thou absent, when one word from thee could call me from the shades of death!"

Anselmo raised the youth from the ground, sighed deeply as he again folded him to his heart, and. pointing to the gallery, retreated through the opposite door.

Alfonso pensively bent his way to the apartment where he had left his anxious friends, whom he found counting the passing hours, having devoted the time of his absence to painful conjecture; and not to sleep.

On entering, he threw himself into Torançi's arms, and in tremulous accents informed him, that his errand had been propitious, even beyond his most daring hopes.

"But this is no time for explanation," continued he: "I am ordered by a much-injured, but superior being, to summon you to the assistance of a dying man!—Follow me,

dear Raimond; and thou," good Bertram, holding out his hand to the half-affrighted youth, "pour some of the wine into a goblet, and attend us."

Without replying, they instantly joined Alfonso, who taking the taper, advanced to the anti-room; and thence proceeded through the lonely apartments, to that where lay this wretched victim of guilt.

On approaching the bed, their surprise was beyond expression, on beholding the count writhing in all the agony of a condemned wretch, and cursing the day of his birth.

Alfonso advancing, attempted to soothe him; but at the sight of him, his fury increased: he gnashed his teeth, and raising himself, with the voice of a demon called for a dagger.

"Begone, old hoary villain!—begone!" cried he. "Give me young Victor!—Where is Angela?—let her refuse—he dies! St. Almi is dead—his bones lye whitening in a distant land!"

After a moment's pause he shrieked, "Off, fiend!

fiend!—thou tearest my vitals. Ah! bring not Alfonso against me—I know where his carcass is—safe hid enough in his mother's bed room—Victor and Angela's nuptial chamber!—Ha! ha! ha! the fool, to think of safety there! Did you bear him down the narrow staircase to the dormitory?—Hush! some one comes—it is Angela—the blood gushes from her heart!—look—Uberto, to thy duty—old dotard! I will spare the boy, but let her not refuse.——Ah! thou returnest, St. Almi—this then to thy heart!" Thus saying, he sprung from the grasp of those surrounding him, rushed forward to the adjoining room, and fell once more senseless on the ground.

Alfonso, whose feelings were torn with agony during the preceding scene, affectionately wrung Tóranci's hand, pointed to the despairing wretch, and in silence quitted the apartment in search of father Anselmo. He traversed the range of rooms, seeking him in vain; and led, rather by chance than intention, to the chamber his friends had quitted, he found him supporting old Jerome in his

arms,

arms, and trying to re-animate him by the most endearing expressions.

Alfonso advanced in astonishment; and Anselmo leaving the unconscious man to his care, retreated to the inner room, to wait his recovery.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE old steward, on the count's departure with his unfortunate wife, had remained for some minutes in deep reflection, deploring his dear lady's fate, and wringing his hands in excess of grief. As his sorrow subsided, he recollected with terror the count demanding the keys—his rage on finding them missing—and, his infernal look on quitting the house. He now trembled for Alfonso, and doubted not of the count's intention of sacrificing him also to his ambition or hate. Alfonso's declared intention of visiting the castle, and searching into the bottom of the mystery, also recurred to him.

"Poor youth! said Jerome, "thou art, I fear, at that murderous place, and count Rialves knows it. I have but little left of life, but that little thou art welcome to."

Under

Under this impression, this faithful friend hastened to arrange the domestic concerns, and instantly prepare for his departure. The dread that involuntarily affected him, as he thought of the neglected castle, vanished before the wish of flying to the rescue of its youthful lord. Early in the morning Jerome embarked, and after a tempestuous passage, landed on the Sicilian shore.

Fatigue and anxiety obliged the old man to take some hours rest in the cottage of poor Ursula, where he heard several marvellous relations of the lights and dreadful spectres that were seen in the dead of night, issuing from the untenanted mansion.

Towards evening he took leave of his kind host, and pursued his way to the castle gate: his feeble hand trembled as he gently knocked to demand admittance, and when no answer was returned, some minutes elapsed ere he could again venture to repeat the summons. Toranci and Bertram, whose surprise had at first prevented their moving, now cautiously traversed the court-yard, and the latter prudently drawing aside the sliding shutter, covering a

small

small grating in the door, heard his name distinctly though feebly pronounced by his father. A very few minutes conveyed the trembling steward from his disagreeable station to a comfortable apartment.—After embracing Raimond and Bertram, and expressing his joy at finding them, he eagerly inquired after Alfonso; and on hearing the place of his retreat that night, he groaned: but soon recovered his usual serenity, under the persuasion that the innocent had nothing to fear: "Yet," said he, "I am innocent; but I should not dare to pass the hours of midnight in that deserted spot, for all the world could give." After watching an hour, he at length yielded to his son's intreaties, and retired to a bed in the adjoining room, where oppressed by age, anxiety, and fatigue, he soon fell asleep, undisturbed by Alfonso's entrance, summoning his friends to attend him.

The painful ideas of his waking hours conjured fearful images to his fancy, and starting he awoke.—Father Anselmo, after leaving the anti-room, had descended to the chapel, and drawn the bolts across the doors, incautiously left open by his pre-occupied son, and passing

through

through the corridor leading from the chapel to the eastern wing, beheld with surprise, the private door to the oratory stairs, also open; he closed and barred this also, and crossing the gallery, wandered to the apartment just forsaken by the young men.—Here he seated himself at a table to wait Alfonso's return, and resting his head on his hand, fell into a train of thought naturally arising from such extraordinary events; when Jerome, unable to compose himself again to sleep, rose from his restless bed, and advanced into the apartment, intending to pass the remainder of the night with Raimond and Bertram: but on seeing Anselmo, he shrieked, and fell on his knees with uplifted hands—St. Almi sprung forward to raise his ancient domestic, forgetting the many years his friends had thought him numbered with the dead. The old man's nerves were too infirm to support the appearance of what he considered a supernatural being, and he sunk senseless in his master's arms.

Alfonso's voice soon restored Jerome to recollection: but his affrighted senses had received the impression of having beheld a

vision, and throwing himself on his knees, and eagerly looking round, he exclaimed, "Where is he!—Where is my lord!"

"No spirit haunts this deserted abode, good Jerome, but a human being—the best of men; speak, kind friend, and ease my tortured bosom. Ah! tell——"

"Oh, no! 'tis my lord St. Almi—your *father*—my murdered lord! murdered by count Rialves! My dear young master! my lord, my beloved lord hear me! Oh! I am innocent! as my soul hopes for mercy, I am innocent!

"My beloved, my long lost child!" exclaimed St. Almi, rushing from the room, and clasping Alfonso to his breast: "do I indeed embrace my son, who was dead, and is alive—lost for so many years, and found again! Scarcely can I believe the joyful tidings; speak, kind old man, speak to thy living master! thy friend! confirm the joyful tidings."

Alfonso had fallen on his knees before his father, incapable of uttering a sound; while the trembling steward, unable to quit his seat, sat with a vacant eye fixed on his living master.

"Almighty

"Almighty Power!" exclaimed Anselmo, kneeling beside his son; "make me worthy the happiness thy goodness has reserved for thy unworthy servant."

A silence of some minutes ensued, when old Jerome, recovering from his surprise, ran towards him, fell at his feet, and taking his hand pressed it to his lips, again calling him his lord—his murdered lord, Alfonso's *father!*

This affecting and interesting scene was interrupted by the entrance of Toranci, whose astonishment at the sight of the majestic stranger, soon gave place to demonstrations of the most unbounded joy and gratitude.—St. Almi felt himself pressed to Raimond's bosom, who called him his friend and preserver.

"Tell me thy name dear youth," said the good monk:—"Thou must be my Victor's friend, since I find thee here—on such an errand too."

The reply once more drew expressions of wonder and thanks from Anselmo's lips: "My sister's son! she lives then also," continued he, raising his grateful eyes to heaven—"Oh! may I be permitted to support this sudden torrent

of

of prosperity, with the moderation, I hope I have borne adversity!"

The joyous party lost sight of every former sorrow; and, in their reciprocal inquiries and answers, Raimond intirely forgot that his intention in seeking Alfonso was, to declare the frenzy and apparently approaching dissolution of their common foe. Anselmo was the first to recollect the wretched man; and, on hearing of the delirious state of his mind, with the benevolence of a superior being, prepared to attend his dying couch.

Accompanied by the young men, he entered this awful chamber, the scene of don Antonio's former crimes: that in which he planned the commission of others; and that of his premature death—the immediate result of the machinations of his evil—his corrupted heart!

Anselmo, like an angel of peace, drew near the dying sinner, whose frantic gestures had been succeeded by a sullen torpor into which he had fallen, and in which he remained for some time after their entrance.

By Anselmo's desire Alfonso advanced, and addressed him. The sound of his voice roused

him

him. He started, and averting his face, talked incoherently of Angela, of Rosalia, and the duke d'Alvermo. "There is only Alfonso to perish," said he. "Hark! Pedro—that for thy trouble thou shalt be advanced at court—I will employ my interest to promote thee—Hush!—now is donna Maria my own!—Angela never can return to upbraid me!—Upbraid me!—She, Ah! ah! ah!—Poison will do.—There lies Victor St. Almi, poor fool!—That cursed old villain too—he saved him in his childhood—the serpent that has gnawed my very intrails—may my soul perish if I forgive him!"—He then again sunk into a state of stupor, and, at intervals only, by his groans and alternate shrieks, proved that he still existed.

Alfonso trembled for his mother. Rialves's words sufficiently shewed the horrid purpose of his soul.

Anselmo, in his turn, felt his heart faulter at a name once so dear, and casting an eye of tenderness on his son, whose haggard features and pale countenance proved his alarm and agitation, he approached the hardened sinner; and,

and, in a loud voice, pronouncing his name, adjured him to repent of his manifold crimes.

"The hour of retribution is come, unhappy man! Cast not away the consolation still within thy reach! Look on me, Rialves—me, thy relation—once thy friend! Let me teach thee the way to peace, if possible, in this solemn hour of dissolution!—Hear me, Antonio, on my own wrongs pronounce thy pardon!—those of the unfortunate Angela cry aloud for vengeance; but her gentle soul would, in this awful moment, join her prayers to mine, to turn thee to repentance. This injured youth also, whom thy cruelty had condemned to a premature grave, will join his supplications to ours!"

Anselmo ceased.—A dead silence ensued.

After some minutes Rialves shrieked frightfully, and attempted to raise himself up, to escape from Bertram, who held him. Anselmo and Alfonso sprung forward to prevent him.

"Off, fiends," cried he, trying to tear himself from their hold—"Hell—damnation—tortures—St. Almi, Alfonso, Angela, Rosalia

 —all!

—all! all, hurry me downward to perdition!—See, Valdenza lifts his head above the waves, and laughs me to scorn—young Angela too—Hush! she shrieks—Was the dagger poisoned?—Art thou sure the blood flowed—Send Hubert to the chapel. St. Almi—thy Angela is mine, Ah, ah, ah, ah!

Anselmo trembled, and loosed his hold. Rialves springing forward, ran frantic through the chamber, hastily caught up the dagger from the table, and plunged it in his breast. He gave a dreadful groan, and fell. The purple blood flowed from the gaping wound, and the unresisting culprit was again conveyed to the bed, and submitted with sullen groans to the wound being dressed.

At about the distance of a mile lived a fraternity of poor friars, who employed their hours in attending the sick or wounded poor.

Anselmo, overcome by the horror of the preceding scene, and his mind still agitated by the events of the night, felt himself unable to contend with this wretched man. Committing the care of him, therefore, to old Jerome and his son, accompanied by Toranci and Alfonso,

he

he bent his way towards their abode. Two of the charitable brothers attended them back, carrying thither every thing necessary for the relief of the dying criminal.

The wound was mortal!—The dagger which pierced St. Almi's breast, and glittered over the head of his defenceless infant, ready to strike the fatal blow, had now drunk the life-blood of the inhuman tyrant!

Some time after the arrival of the friars, the wretched culprit recovered his senses, when seeing Anselmo at the bottom of his bed, he groaned and tore his hair, bidding him begone, and not sink him lower into hell—then recapitulating the enormity of his crimes, and calling on Angela to forgive him; alternately cursing and crying for mercy; clinging to life in the last pangs of dissolution—with horrid yells and convulsive gestures, this unhappy slave of vice resigned his guilty soul.

Thus fell, by his own daring hand, the detestable Rialves!—the favourite of his sovereign—the wealthy!—mighty!—admired!—and envied Rialves!

Fallen in the vigour of his age into the pit his guilty hands had dug for the innocent! Vanquished in the midst of his triumphs—when his pride had swoln in proportion to its success, and he haughtily said in his heart; "There is none to avenge the cause of the injured—none to listen to the cry of the oppressed!"

From respect to the unfortunate victim of his lawless tyranny, and her amiable child, the funeral was performed in the most private manner: the good friars who attended his last moments; were too much affected at the dreadful scene, not to comply with Anselmo's desire of secrecy, respecting the acknowledged crimes and fatal end of this hardened sinner; and by them was his deformed carcass consigned to the dust.

After the painful ceremony of committing the remains of the hateful Rialves to the earth, Anselmo, anxious to quit a place, the scene of so much horror, proposed their embarking as soon as possible. But first he introduced his new-found relations to his friend the abbot, who received them with almost paternal tenderness, and engaged them to pass two days

in his convent. To this proposal a mutual consent followed. The worthy abbot could not sufficiently admire the wonderful incidents which had discovered the father to the child, the noble nature of the youth himself, the exalted friendship of Toranci, nor the exemplary conduct of the good steward and his son. During the interval they passed in the monastery, they shared his kindness by turns; and when the hour of parting came, he wept on their neck, as he blessed them with pious fervour.

"One little space!" said father Anselmo, pressing his hand. "I go to embrace a long-lost sister—here my earthly wishes end. After this one, this last embrace, I shall return to my convent, and devote the remnant of my days to gratitude to heaven for such unexpected blessings! You, my beloved son! child of a mother the most exemplary and virtuous of the human race! forget not to reward her by your unremitted care and gratitude, for her unparalled sacrifices to your welfare. Cherish and love her, if possible, as well as she had loved you! but watch well your words and actions, and

 spare

spare her a discovery of my existing. Such a knowledge would be fatal to her; for her gentle mind would sink under this severe stroke."

Jerome, in various conversations he had with St. Almi, informed him of every circumstance which had occurred from the time of his departure from Roviego, to the moment when Providence had conducted him to Alfonso's arms; and from these particulars he learned how to appreciate justly, the real worth of all the actors in this extraordinary tragedy.

He loved his wife at parting, with all the ardour of youthful passion: he now venerated her as a superior being, on finding her life one grand sacrifice to the most sublime of duties.

CHAP. XIX.

VICTOR St. Almi, now father Anselmo, nearly at the time his letters to his lovely wife, and her worthy father, had given them hopes of seeing him with them in a very short space, was dangerously wounded by a party of the enemy, who rushing from an ambuscade, surprised and slew several of the men under his command; and, after wounding, would have made him prisoner, had not the remainder of his brave troop rallied; and dispersing the assailants, borne their commander from the scene of action. This circumstance retarded his return; but concealing it from their knowledge, he still filled his letters with the delightful certainty of rejoining them very shortly, and only waited to recruit his exhausted strength, to begin his journey

towards a place which contained his dearest treasures.

Rialves, who had long been jealous of his cousin's happiness; and had never pardoned Angela the preference she had given St. Almi over himself, had often watched an opportunity of satisfying both his revenge and unlawful passion. The present appeared too favourable to disregard. He was an officer in a different regiment on the same service; and, though on no cordial terms with St. Almi, no sooner heard of his being wounded, than he paid him a visit of condolence, offered him his services, and lamented his misfortune with such seeming sincerity; that St. Almi, too candid himself to suspect another of an evil design, forgot his cousin's rage, and threatened vengeance on Angela's rejection of him; and confiding in his friendly expressions and manner, incautiously trusted him with his intention of returning to Sicily as soon as it was possible for him to travel without endangering his life.

The morning prior to his departure, Rialves took his leave with repeated expressions of good

will; and to St. Almi's invitation of visiting Rovjego, replied, "that as soon as he could believe the baron and his lovely daughter had pardoned him his senseless behaviour, he should hasten thither on the wings of friendship; till then, he begged he would make them feel, if possible, the anguish of a doting heart on finding itself rejected;" and smilingly pressing St. Almi's hand, he added: "*You* can form no idea of such a pang—happy St. Almi!"

In a deep disguise, accompanied by three desperate bravoes, Rialves waited in an obscure glen in the road St. Almi was to pass, and rushing out on his unsuspecting friend, slew his two attendants, and fell on him sword in hand. St. Almi nobly defended himself against the assailants for some time; but at length overcome by numbers, and exhausted by his weak state of health, he sunk on the ground. At that instant the dastardly Rialves sprung like a tiger on his defenceless prey, and wrenching his poignard from his feeble hand, plunged it in his breast; then drawing it thence, reeking with gore, he considered the weapon with a malicious smile; for it was the old baron's steel, given as a token

of affection to his son-in-law, and wiping the blade upon the long grass which grew round the spot, put it in his bosom, and retired.

St. Almi was discovered a short time after by a traveller passing that way, who humanely turned out of his road to apprise the monks of a neighbouring convent of the unfortunate man's situation. They immediately repaired to the spot, carried the wounded stranger to their hospitable abode, and by their skill and care restored him after some hours to consciousness and hope.

Rialves, as soon as he had put a period, as he imagined, to his rival's life, not daring to shew himself immediately at Roviego, where his evil conscience told him to beware of the baron and Angela's penetrating eye, crossed over to Sicily, and concealed himself in the neighbourhood of Palermo, employing a spy to watch round the castle, and discover whatever was transacted there, while he waited his opportunity to appear.

The baron, on not finding his son return according to his promise, imputing his absence to the uncertainty of war, had solemnized

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the marriage between Angela and Victor, still hoping a few weeks at furthest would be the utmost extent of his absence. At the end of that time no accounts arriving, gave him the greatest pain; and when month after month rolled on, and still he came not, this worthy father in vain endeavoured to restrain his grief. St. Almi, likewise, a few months after his marriage, had been ordered to join his regiment, which made part of the troops destined against the Netherlands, and it was not till some time after his departure, that intelligence arrived of Valdenza's death. This was a mortal wound to the disconsolate parent, who, unable to conquer his sorrow, became a prey to melancholy, and falling into a confirmed bad state of health, soon sunk into an untimely grave. He blessed his daughter in his dying moments, consoling her for his loss in the almost immediate expected return of a husband deserving her tenderest affection; and taking the infant Victor in his feeble arms, invoked Heaven to protect his childhood and mature age; and make him heir to his parents' virtues, as well as fortune. Thus terminated the existence of a man whose

career from youth to age had been spent in the constant practice of virtue and benevolence! Abundant and sincere were the lamentations of the poor and distressed: their tears, like the dew from heaven, moistened the good man's tomb; and their sighs rose in incense to the throne of mercy, for him who had so long been their father and protector!

The spy stationed near the castle did not fail to impart these welcome tidings directly to his employer, whose joy at this event was past description. It was beyond his most daring hopes. St. Almi, Valdenza, Roviego himself! all confounded with the dust!—It was almost too great to be reality—No barrier now remained to oppose his wishes; he might hold high his head, and walk triumphantly to his revenge.

The consuming sorrow which had precipitated the worthy baron to an early grave, probably spared his guilty kinsman the commission of another crime: for already had his callous heart conceived the dreadful project of depriving Angela of her only guardian. He waited one week from the auspicious day, los-

ing no opportunity of maturing his plan; then transported himself to the castle, where, claiming the privilege of relationship, he gained admittance; and feigning the appearance of the most sincere friendship; bewailed the greatness of her loss, and shed many hypocritical tears to the memory of his friend and brother. Donna Angela never thought Rialves amiable before; but he suited his expression and behaviour so well to hers, on the present occasion, that when he omitted his visit, she rather regretted it, as affording her an opportunity the less of indulging her sorrow with one whose sympathy consoled her. St. Almi also returned not: her heart bled in silence at his long absence; for delicacy forbade her speaking on that subject to a man whose vows, though she had rejected, yet whose feelings she had no right to wound; and in the caresses of her innocent child, she found her only source of consolation. The artful foe the while watched his unsuspecting prey; and at length had a letter conveyed to her, not only mentioning St. Almi being wounded, but past recovery. Her grief and despair at this intelligence were excessive,

and

and Rialves, after sympathizing in her woe, threw himself at her feet, confessed his unextinguished love, and besought her pity. Angela rising, cast on him a look of astonishment and disdain, and in silence quitted the apartment.

This was to be the signal. Did she accept his offered hand—Well!—if not—force should gain what inclination refused. Poor donna Angela, among the number of her domestics, had few who could withstand the count's glittering bribes. At the head of these internal foes, stood father Hubert, to whom the late baron, from motives of pity, had offered an asylum in his peaceful mansion, on the death of an uncle; the only friend he had possessed on earth; and who had been confessor to the family for many years, and through life had supported the character of an upright man.

Hubert was not by nature vicious: had no great temptation crossed his path, he might have pursued his way without much deviating; but his weak and avaricious mind was incapable of resisting the gilded bait. The crime at first appeared of no great magnitude—" It was only performing

performing the marriage ceremony a second time for the lady Angela with a relation who loved her to distraction. Her first lord was no more.—It was true his death was premature, and unaccounted for; but the count had assured him he was no more, and it was no affair of his to inquire when and where." Thus, this wretched and ungrateful man, stifling the monitory voice within, plunged at once into the vortex of guilt; and hurrying from crime to crime at the command of his imperious master, sunk deeper and deeper into the abyss of vice; till the awful voice of his much injured benefactor awoke to remorse his callous heart, and turned him to the path of repentance. Every avenue to the castle was known to the base Rialves. Hubert, who kept the keys of the chapel, agreed to deliver them; and the small door leading from the garden to the oratory was left purposely unclosed to admit the midnight ruffian. Those doors, from the chapel to the apartments and staircase, were also unlocked by Hubert, after the family were retired for the night; and after the faithful steward, whom Rialves did not dare even to suspect of

treachery, had made his usual visit through the mansion. A small secret gate was constructed in the southern wall, which was never opened for the ordinary use of the baron's family. It had been executed by the order of St. Almi, after his marriage with Roviego's heiress; and opened on a beautifully variegated country, through which a level walk of about a mile had been raised for the accommodation of the newly wedded pair, who frequently stroled from the baronial castle to a delightful little temple situated on a gentle eminence, whence, from its various aspects they could enjoy the beauties of a lovely landscape, and a wide expanse of ocean.

Once only, since the day of St. Almi's departure, the baron, leaning on his daughter's arm, accompanied her to this charming retreat: from that time, it had been unvisited, Angela reserving the pleasure of embellishing it afresh till the arrival of her lord, who, in his last letter announcing his speedy return, had, in the anticipation of approaching felicity, given the reins to his imagination, and said, "he already in idea sprung forward to embrace his

wife

wife, whom he saw on the wings of love and pleasure flying to meet him at the gate sacred to love and friendship."

This gate was of curious construction, resembling in appearance, both within and without, the wall in which it was practised; and the labyrinth of trees so ingeniously planted round, that a common observer might have passed without noticing it. Hubert and Jerome only, knew the secret of its being made—St. Almi and his lovely wife alone had keys to open it. The vile insidious priest, the night of the monster's intended assault, purloined that sacred key from a drawer in her oratory, where it had been deposited by Angela till her husband's return.

After unbarring the doors of the chapel and oratory, Hubert silently stole along the garden, and unlocked the secret gate. Rialves, true to his appointment, was already at his post with his ruffian myrmidons. Springing forward, he roughly pushed the treacherous priest aside, fastened the door, and secured the key.

The unconscious victim, after giving many tears to the memory of her father, brothei, and absent husband, had embraced her infant boy, who lay sleeping in smiling innocence on a little couch within the covering of the same curtain, and fallen into a sweet repose, from which she was awaked by the sound of the ruffian's foot pacing her chamber. She clasped her baby to her breast, and called aloud on St. Almi to protect her.

Don Antonio advanced, after attempting an apology.

Angela ordered him to begone—at the same time wrapping a mantle round herself and son, left her bed, and fled towards the door.

The monster now tore the infant from her arms, and hurried with him through the apartments, down the staircase into the chapel, followed by this distracted mother, whose cries rent the air. Hubert here waited to perform the sacrilegious ceremony.

Angela, only intent on her child's safety—followed the ravisher, conjuring him to restore him to her arms. Stopping at the altar, Rialves turned round, and explained to the terrified

rified and half frantic mother the nature of the concession which alone could save the infant's life.

"St. Almi," cried he, "is no more! He died of a wound received in a rencontre with a party of the concealed foe. Yield, Angela, to my love—my right to you was prior to St. Almi's—fortune now vindicates my cause, and no earthly power, I swear, shall change my purpose! Uberto, to your duty."

The wretched Angela, in an attitude of despair and stupor, remained motionless, her hands crossed upon her breast, and eyes raised to Heaven. Hubert, in a tremulous tone, for his soul was yet new to daring crimes, began the ceremony.

The door from the oratory at that moment was thrown open; and the faithful and worthy Jerome, followed by his terrified wife, rushed in. Alarmed by their lady's shrieks, they had hastened to her chamber, and seeing it deserted, descended through the oratory to the chapel, from whence the cries of distress seemed to issue.

This unexpected appearance seemed to produce an electric shock on all present. Hubert

stopped;

stopped. Angela, awaked from her trance of horror, sprung towards Rialves, caught her child from him; and hurrying to her faithful domestic, clung to him, conjuring him to save her. Surprise for an instant overcame the ruffian; but in the next, like an enraged lion darting on his prey, he felled Jerome, who had stepped forward to defend his lady, to the ground, thrust his fainting wife from the chapel, dragged Angela to the altar; and violently plucking the screaming child from her embrace, he drew the murdering poignard from his bosom, swearing to silence "his infernal cries for ever."

The agonized mother shuddering with fear, and frantic with grief, fell prostrate at his feet, besought his pity in terms the most affecting, and called on the shades of her departed parent, husband, brother, to aid her distress; while the barbarian sneering at her emotion, dared to profane the majesty of the sacred place with vows of unhallowed love, closed by an oath to immolate the blooming boy the instant a positive refusal passed her lips. Placing the child upon the altar, he stood with upraised

arm

arm to strike, while Hubert, by his order, once more began the profane rites.

The honest steward recovering from the blow, courageously rushed forward, struck the book from the dastardly Hubert's hand, and called on Heaven aloud for vengeance. This faithful exemplary domestic at that instant received a stab from Rialves' dagger, and as he fell, exclaimed, "Monster! may justice some day meet you in this violated place!"

Confusion now ensued—don Antonio's hired bravoes held the shrieking victim, while father Hubert, in a voice scarcely articulate, muttered the ceremony that condemned his benefactress, his only friend, to a life of misery and shame!

CHAP. XX.

RIALVES observing the hapless Angela apparently in the agonies of death—her fixed eye and convulsive features expressing the approach of speedy dissolution, trembled lest his victim should escape him. Hastily flinging down the glittering poignard he held, and catching her in his arms, he conveyed her to a chamber, raised her on a bed, and placed the affrighted infant by her.

Some time elapsed, ere the caresses of her smiling boy—smiling amidst the surrounding horror, had any power. At length, his lisping voice and redoubled caresses reached the mother's heart. Opening her aching eyes, she eagerly pressed him to her bosom, bathed his rosy cheeks with her burning tears, and fearfully looking round her, endeavoured to recollect the fatal events of the late dreadful night.

Alas!

Alas! it was no dream, no ideal monster, the chimera of a disordered brain! Unequal to support the appalling certainty, she relapsed into her late state of unconsciousness, and during many days, seemed sinking into the grave.

Let us draw a veil over the wretchedness of this devoted victim, on beholding herself lost for ever to every gleam of hope: a fixed melancholy took possession of her mind—even young Victor's innocent caresses ceased to delight.

"Hadst thou, sweet babe! not existed," would she say, as the tear stood trembling in her eye, while she kissed his ruby lips, "thy poor mother would now be resting in the silent grave, restored to her departed friends!"

Father Hubert, terrified at the dreadful deed he had done, no sooner found himself alone with Jerome, than obeying the impulse most natural to the heart, humanity, he raised the bleeding man from the earth, bound up the wound, and after recovering, supported him to his own chamber. The stab itself was slight; but the violent feelings of this worthy man, joined to the contusion on the head he had

before

before received, and the loss of blood added to these, very shortly brought on a state of total insensibility. Many days elapsed ere he could leave his room: he longed, but dared not venture to approach his mistress's apartment, lest the count's anger should deprive her of almost the only faithful domestic among her numerous train; and his wife, who during his illness had attended him with much care and affection, wished, but feared to apprise her lady of her husband's still existing.

Angela seldom spoke to her affectionate attendant; but often looking at her with fearful eyes, would press her hand affectionately, and turn aside to conceal her emotion.

Theresa ventured one day to raise her lady's extended hand to her lips, and speak of consolation.

"My good friend," replied she, bursting into tears, "your little Bertram shall be mine —he shall divide my love with Victor—both shall be my children. While I live, we will be sisters, and your sweet boy shall have two mothers. Alas! their poor fathers!" She then tenderly embraced the two children, who were

playing by her side; and her attendant interrupted her caresses, to inform her that Jerome lived, and only waited a favourable moment to assure her that he was devoted to her service. For the first time since her inauspicious marriage, a gleam of joy overspread Angela's countenance.

"I thank thee, Almighty Power!" exclaimed she, "for having saved this worthy man! and spared Rialves this enormous crime; and me, the grief of losing so true, so inestimable a friend!"

The second week after their marriage, the count proposed removing to a seat he possessed in a retired situation, in the vicinity of Salerno. Prior to her departure, the countess ventured to inform him of Jerome's recovery, conjuring him, at the same time, to leave her this invaluable friend. A threatening scowl at first contracted his brow, and he was silent: at length, to her reiterated entreaties he replied,

"I consent, on proviso that Jerome shall swear at the altar, in presence of myself and father Uberto, that no circumstance, however plausible, shall tempt him to reveal the man-

ner of our marriage, or any thing that has the most distant allusion to it: and that you agree to be separated from your son for a time, who must from this moment lose the name of Victor in that of Alfonso. You cannot object to his bearing your *father's* name, which I am surprised, indeed, you did not give him; but, no doubt, *he* preferred that of his *darling son-in-law*. As a proof of my good-will towards the boy, Theresa shall have the care of him, and bring him up with her own."

The countess shuddered, but submitted to this sentence, on his giving her a solemn promise that he should be restored to her at the end of a few months. Rialves interrupted her entreaties on Victor's account, by a promise that he would consider him as his own son; and sealed it with a dreadful oath, calling on Heaven to blast him to all eternity, did he ever attempt any thing contrary to young Victor's welfare.

The worthy domestic repaired to the altar, solemnly took the oath prescribed, and also never to divulge the secret of Victor's birth. Early in the morning of this day, the count received

ceived the joyful tidings, that the worthless domestics he had bribed to his interests, had found a watery grave, in their passage thence to the Continent. He gloried in the wondrous enterprise he had achieved; and hailed propitious fate, which seemed eager to crown his every wish with success.

By his command, a mock funeral was performed, and young St. Almi's untimely fate sincerely wept by the honest rustics, long accustomed to live on the bounty of Roviego's heiress. Her own health was reported to be so much impaired by her recent sorrows, that her recovery was almost impossible; and a change of scene immediately necessary, to prevent her falling a victim to such accumulated affliction.

Rialves himself was conscious, that the account invented by his artifice was much nearer the reality than he wished to believe. The unfortunate Angela, covered, with shame, and a prey to consuming grief, passed her wretched hours in the solitude of her own apartment; a stranger to every consolation, except that arising from the unfeigned and tender sympathy of

her two domestics. The glow of health and flush of happiness which had tinged her cheek, and given lustre to her eye, were changed to the downcast look of fixed melancholy, and the pallid hue of undermining sickness.

The morning dawned which was to convey St. Almi's unfortunate widow from the abode of her youth and promised felicity: she rose with unusual alacrity, and felt her oppressed heart lighter at the idea of quitting a place whose every scene recalled to the wounded mind, some fond remembrance, or some deep regret.

As the vessel swiftly cut the heaving billows, and the fair shores of Sicily disappeared from her sight, she stood on the deck, straining her eye-balls to catch a last look at the retiring mountains, while her attentive ear still listened to the benedictions of the many who, during so many years, had received consolation from her lips, and support from her liberal hand.

As every terrestrial object faded from her view, she felt the futility of all human expectation; and sinking on a bench, wept the loss of those scenes which had so lately filled her mind

with

with intolerable anguish. The utmost secrecy had been observed in their removal. Young Victor was conveyed on board by his weeping nurse by day-break. An order, in the form of a supplication, had been sent the peasantry, not to quit their abodes that morning, till after her departure, her spirits being unequal to bear the smallest agitation. Many, however, though not daring to appear on the beach, stood in the distance, praying for her recovery, and pouring blessings on her head.

The third day landed them, after a prosperous voyage, near Policastro, which was the appointed place of separation between Angela and her child. Rialves, for once appeared endued with a sentiment of feeling, and he permitted Jerome to accompany them to their destined abode. During the few hours which elapsed in conveying them to his abode, he frequently reiterated his promise of protection and affection to Alfonso, and called on the heavenly powers to record the oath.

Father Hubert was secretly dispatched, almost immediately after their landing, back to Sicily, to convey the tidings of donna Angela's

 death

death to the honest rustics, distributing also amongst them a liberal sum, as the last legacy of their benefactress; and a solemn mass was celebrated in the chapel for the repose of its late owner. Hubert, overcome by the groans and sobs that at intervals struck his ear during the affecting scene, frequently stopped to recover breath, and silence his accusing conscience; for the gnawing worm, remorse, preyed on his guilty heart, and already gave him a foretaste of the torments of the damned.

CHAP. XXI.

FROM the time of her landing, the countess's health daily visibly declined, nor could the tidings of young Alfonso's grace and beauty afford her consolation. Jerome was allowed to visit him monthly, and don Antonio, whose passion for his wife was as yet unabated, himself at length proposed the child's return, their quitting Salerno for a while, and retiring to a small sequestered estate he had in Tuscany. His proposal was received with joy, the journey was immediately taken, and the lovely boy was restored to the embrace of his doating mother; who delighted with the beauty and grace of her darling, felt that life had yet its value; and trembling for his fate, should her demise leave him in the power of the unfeeling Rialves, the next heir to the estates should she

die childless; she deplored her late desire of joining her husband in his tomb; and became as cautiously attentive to her health, as she before had been neglectful of it.

Two years elapsed from this epocha, when the countess found herself the parent of a second child; and the infant Rosalia now divided her care with her beloved Alfonso.

The count, till now, the object of her horror, she endeavoured to consider in a more favourable point of view; he was the father of Rosalia, and her husband.—She tried to forget her wrongs, to think of his virtues, and not his faults.

Rialves was now become indifferent, and by his caprice soon damped her rising wish to please him. From indifference, his treatment sometimes became harsh and tyrannic. Absence, however, often relieved her from the scourge of her tyrant; but as years stole on, and his humour became more morose, she trembled for her son's safety, which induced her to consent to his being, at an early age, removed from home to a distance for education.

Soon

Soon after Rosalia's birth, the countess sincerely joined her tears to those of the faithful steward, on the loss of his wife, whose declining health had long threatened her dissolution. Respecting the memory of her faithful attendant, she wished to give young Bertram the advantage of a polite education, and proposed his being permitted to accompany Alfonso: but to this the count gave a positive denial. His dislike to Alfonso had become visible, and to mortify him, or his unhappy wife, was his constant aim: the boy, doating on his mother, and regarding his reputed father with a jealous eye, feared, but loved him not; and once boldly asserted, on Rialves' speaking in a menacing tone to the countess, "that the man who should attempt to harm his mother, should only find the way through his heart."

As his years advanced, affected at her mild admonitions, he endeavoured to conquer his feelings; and at length arguing himself into a persuasion of his error, treated the count with that distant respect, which is the only mark of

duty a haughty and unkind parent had a right to expect.

Alfonso declared at an early age a strong partiality to arms—read with delight the mighty deeds of the warriors of ancient Greece and Rome, and earnestly entreated to be permitted to enter the martial band of heroes.

The count readily consented to his proposal. His mother grieved, but reason reconciled her feelings to necessity. She felt his safety was sometimes in danger, and praying incessantly for his welfare, committed him to his uncertain destiny.

Rosalia, who was now her only consolation and companion, by her docility and love rewarded all her care. Rialves, who dreaded his amiable wife's being really known, doomed her to a gloomy solitude: but his daughter's beauty fired his ambition, and making frequent excursions to Naples, he took every opportunity of flattering his sister's vanity. He soon found means to induce her to forget his past treatment: she invited her interesting niece to spend a few months with her, and promised her brother to introduce her to such society as

would

would surely place her in a rank she was formed to adorn.

Roberto, who had been for some time in the count's pay, had, no great while before, been engaged by Pedro to carry off young Angela, and discovered to his surprise, by some circumstances, that monsieur de Sanval was no other than his old master, Julius di Valdenza; and judging the effect this intelligence would have on Rialves, he communicated it to his private ear. Rialves started—and after having deliberately reflected on the subject, gradually broke his wishes to his informer; and on finding him apt, talked of the golden harvest which would await *him*, who should rid him of the serpent.

Roberto undertook the dreadful mission—dispatch was the word. Valdenza once slain, his daughter was to be disposed of—how he had not determined; but that was, comparatively, a trifling concern.

Roberto repaired to the spot, and soon gained all the intelligence necessary of the family in the neighbourhood. Mistaking Sebastian for his master, he fired, and certain

of not having missed his aim, he waited patiently near, expecting the confusion such an event generally produces; and did not discover, till his intended victims were beyond his reach, that his project had failed altogether. Sebastian, who he found was the friend as well as servant of the family, he decoyed on board a vessel, whose owner who would do any action, however bad, for gain, sold him to a Moorish rover.

Many months elapsed—Rialves, though he stifled his deep chagrin, and though he execrated his accomplice's failure, yet received him with smiles and thanks for the attempt. Roberto, ashamed at having been thus foiled, swore never to give over his search till they were found. Chance again befriended him after many months, and threw him into company with the man employed by Valdenza to buy him books at Naples, from whose description of the signor and his daughter, he immediately recognized the persons he so cruelly sought to destroy.

Rialves was just arrived at Naples, when he received intelligence of the baron di Roviego and his daughter's residing in Sicily. He instantly

stantly hurried Rosalia away, not being ignorant of Toranci and her mutual partiality, which her artless manners had taken no pains to conceal; and which the marchesa had communicated to him in jest, as the reason of her refusing the addresses of two very eligible lovers who had presented themselves. The count hastened home, gave orders for their immediate departure, and Jerome and Bertram were commanded to attend. Hubert's services were dispensed with on this occasion; the restless ruffian feared lest suspicion should strike his mind; and a sentiment of compassion find its way into the traitor's heart, on viewing the hapless doom of his ancient master's noble house.

Roviego's daughter was to be immediately immured within the walls of a convent, and instantly forced to take the veil. Himself, if easily entrapped, sent off, without a probability of escape, into Barbary; but if attempting to resist, the sentence of death was already passed upon him. Don Antonio dreaded his prey escaping once more from his merciless fangs, and had no sooner dispatched his myrmidons with the cruel mandate, than he transported his family,

family, whom his jealousy feared to leave behind, to the scene of his former, and intended crimes. ' Alfonso had, during Rosalia's absence, arrived to pass some time at home; and thus unexpectedly visited a place that was to be the scene of his future fortune.'

CHAP. XXII.

THE baron di Roviego after quitting the convent, whose walls immured the countess and his daughter, pursued his way with as much expedition as his feeble state of health would allow towards Nice, hoping there to embrace the object of his long unsuccessful search. On arriving early in the evening, at a small pleasant village a few miles distant from her abode, he stopped at a decent looking inn, intending to pass the night there, and seating himself at a little window looking to the road, the sound of a well-known voice struck his ear:

"Sir," said the speaker, "my lord, a man of the greatest worth, must have stopped here, he ordered me to join him, but some unexpected events hindered me—I was trepanned and sold into slavery; but a little while ago I escaped, and have worked my passage over

from

from Sicily—so I hope you will let me sleep in the stable."

"To be sure I will," replied the good natured host, "and give you a good supper into the bargain, so come along."

Valdenza had already quitted the room, to meet his faithful servant; and, calling him by his name, welcomed him with joy and tenderness, at the very instant the honest innkeeper was leading him into the house. Sebastian's delight was beyond expression; and, following his master into the apartment, he began to pour out his joy and gratitude at thus meeting him:

"Yonder," said he, interrupted his rhapsody, "comes a monk that was in our ship: he had two young signors with him, and they seemed, to be sure, kind hearted enough; but there's no knowing folks by their looks you know, my lord: so I thought I had better lie snug for fear—for how did I know what they might be guilty of; and certain enough I overheard them talk of the duke d'Alvermo, though it was almost in a whisper. I think really, my noble master, that you had better not be seen here: think, my dear lord, how—"

"Good

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Valdenza, starting from his seat, "it is father Anselmo! The sound reached the worthy man: who, raising his head to see who called on his name, felt his hand pressed with rapture by his Sicilian friend —mutual enquiries, mutual good wishes followed.

"This pleasure," said the latter, "is so unexpected, so great! that it is more than I dared hope!"

"Since our parting," interrupted the monk, "I have passed some of the most delightful hours that heaven can grant to man—some dreadful hours also; but their bitterness is passed, while the blessings of the joyful ones remain."

"I have had also my share of bitter and of sweet—I have been a prisoner in a loathsome dungeon, gasping for life; and I have embraced a sister I had many years mourned as dead; and a niece, who is the most perfect of all created beings."

"Our fates are nearly similar, I have found a son, whom, from his infancy, I had deplored; but, in my own joy, let me not forget your

lovely daughter—she is not with you I perceive?"

"No, but with my newly recovered sister, safe in her protection, while I go in search of a nephew whom I long to embrace—my sister's son. Let me here disclose my secret hopes to you: The amiable youth who so nobly offered his protection on that dreadful occasion, in which, next to heaven, I am indebted to you for life, I must indulge in the flattering idea, is that interesting relative whom I seek."

Anselmo fixed his eyes on him in mute astonishment. At that instant Alfonso and Toranci entered the apartment in search of Anselmo. The former no sooner perceived Valdenza, than, quitting Raimond, he rushed into his arms, and embraced him with tenderness and extacy. "This," said Anselmo, taking Alfonso's hand, "this noble youth, whom providence sent us on that perilous night, is my son, my long-lost, long lamented child!"

"Alas," sighed Valdenza, greatly affected, "dear youth, thou needest no title but thy merit to recommend thee to my heart; yet permit me to grieve in this minute at the failure of my

soul's

soul's best hopes. I longed to call the nephew, thy features, which in that time of danger I overlooked, recal a dear, a long departed friend to my mind—my sister's, I fear *murdered* husband! That villain Antonio's base soul was capable of every atrocious deed!" added he, after a pause, and striking his forehead violently.

Anselmo rushed into his arms, and a few moments sufficed to explain all which seemed mysterious in their long separation.

"This worthy youth," said Anselmo, putting Raimond's hand into Valdenza's, is my sister's *only* son, Raimond di Toranci." "And my *dearest* friend," rejoined Alfonso, as Valdenza folded him in silent energy to his heart. "In my childhood he ventured his life to save mine; and now had doubled the obligation, by exposing himself to a greater danger on my account."

"My children," replied the baron, tenderly taking a hand of each, "may your virtues meet the reward they merit."

Valdenza, on recovering his surprise and joy, recollected his worthy Sebastian, who had quitted the room on his master's returning with Anselmo; and going in search of him, introduced him

him as a friend to whom he had the greatest of all obligations. Every hand was held out in friendship to him; and Sebastian felt his heart flutter, as every tongue welcomed him with pleasure.

The good man had yet had no opportunity to ask tidings of his young lady; but now, suddenly turning to Valdenza, he expressed his surprise at not seeing donna Angela.

Alfonso's colour, at her name, rushed to his cheeks, and he turned aside to conceal this visible agitation.

The baron's reply convinced him she was well, and by degrees, not unobserved by his attentive father, he recovered the natural tranquillity of his mind.

The night, instead of being devoted to sleep, was spent in conversation. Anselmo related the late wonderful events of his life in the castle of Roviego; but reserved the particulars of his history for signora di Toranci's ear, to whose abode the following morning would convey them.

Sebastian, at their joint desire, related the events that had happened since their separation.

"On receiving your letter," said he, "to join you in Sicily, I set off, unsuspecting any treachery, and had proceeded without any interruption to a village on the coast; here I intended to pass the night, and embark the following morning.

"On arriving near the shore, I looked round for some vessel to convey me. Very shortly a man came up to me, and asked me whether I wanted a passage, saying, he was bound to Palermo; which I thought very lucky, and so agreed with the owner for my passage. I entered, the wind was fair, we soon got under weigh; and my facetious captain pronounced, that a few days would land me on the Sicilian shore. Still weak from my wound, and somewhat fatigued from my journey, towards evening I was glad to throw myself on a bench, and endeavour to sleep. The night was rather rough, and the next day cloudy, and a violent gale of wind came on. The following night still threatened us, and my patron swore, the weather had been such as to drive us back some leagues. A stranger to these seas, and not suspecting any artifice,

I waited

I waited impatiently the winds becoming favourable, and believed every word he said.

"At length we anchored in a bay, which he said was not far from Palermo. He proposed our waiting till morning to land, the weather being still stormy and dark. To this I objected, my anxiety making every minute appear an hour, till I could see my kind master. The patron, willing to oblige me as he said, on my offering him a reward, consented to indulge me with his boat, and two men to row me ashore, which was, as he said, not more than half a mile. With many thanks I bade him adieu, and immediately leaped into the boat: my seamen plied their oars, and a short time conveyed us from the vessel. I was very silent and thoughtful. Suddenly one of them, springing on me, threw a mantle over my head to stifle my voice; then bound my hands behind me with cords; and thrusting a gag in my mouth, and throwing me on the bottom of the boat, secured me effectually against making any resistance: then taking to their oars, they rowed with redoubled haste for about a couple of hours.

"They

" They now hailed a ship, which I found very near, from the voices that replied—in a few minutes we ran along side it; and I found myself rudely dragged and lifted into the vessel —a few minutes more conveyed me to the hold, where, confined and bruised, I was left to reflect on my folly, and on my unpardonable credulity in trusting to strangers: I who had been witness to such repeated acts of treachery! How in my heart did I curse that wicked man, the duke, as I lay deploring the unhappy fate of my kind benefactor and his lovely daughter, who no doubt, I thought, were already fallen into his hands.

Many days passed, and still I was continued in the hold of the ship. At last, on my promising to make no attempt to escape, my Moorish master, for such he was, shewed me more humanity than the christians, my countrymen and seeming friends, and loosed my chains and let me walk about.

" On arriving at Tunis I was given into the charge of a Moor, whose property it seems I then was. Many of his unfortunate family had been killed and tortured in Spain. His

hatred

hatred to our nation was extreme, and a poor Spaniard, once become his slave, might be considered the most wretched being in the whole world. An iron ring round my leg, that almost eat into my flesh, was never taken off, neither night nor day. The four and twenty hours never passed without my being loaded with stripes by an unfeeling overseer, who appeared to undo even his master in cruely.

"I endeavoured to bear my hard lot without repining, when I reflected on the misfortunes which had pursued you, my dear lord; but I soon became impatient, and even vented my complaints aloud, cursing the hour I was born, and often calling on death to come to my relief.

"On my son's account I was quite easy, for your goodness had long ago made him independant; but the more I thought of you and donna Angela, the more unhappy I was, for not knowing your fate made me fear the worst, and I had no hope of ever seeing you again.

"My cruel tyrant had an only son, a youth about sixteen. This excellent young man would oftentimes speak to the slave who was set

over

over us, and intreat him to remit his severity. One day particularly, passing by at a time, when, overcome by the lashes I had received, I had fainted on the ground, he kindly stopped to order me assistance. 'Oh! Muley Hamet!' exclaimed I, in an agony of grief and despair, 'could you see a man who was so fortunate as to assist your wife and daughter in their distress, thus treated, how would your noble heart be wounded!' As I raised my eyes to heaven, they met those of the compassionate youth, fixed with an inquiring look on me. That night, after my jailor had locked the heavy chain to the ring fastened round my leg, and had left me till morning, I heard a gentle footstep approaching —presently a soft voice, in a whisper, said, 'Christian, didst thou not call on Muley Hamet? Who is that Muley thou invokest?' I then related the particulars of your history, with your last interview with him, his death, your marriage, and had the good fortune to interest his heart. He wiped his eyes several times, during my narration, and after bidding me be of good cheer, quitted me to prevent our being observed.

 A few

"A few days after, Ishmael Omaih, young Osmin's father, was attacked by a violent illness that threatened his life. The obsequious slave, wishing to ingratiate himself into his youthful master's favour, who probably would soon become sole director there, relaxed his usual severity, and affecting to pity our condition, even suffered me to pass the night in the garden without my chains.

"Young Osmin again approached me, 'Christian,' said he, 'now is the favourable moment, Hassan is sent by my father on an affair of moment—he will not return for two days. His authority devolves on another man who is not very hard nor suspicious, because he is good himself—follow me. He led the way: we entered through a private door of the house, and passed unobserved into Hassan's apartment. He then produced a large bunch of keys, tried them in the padlock that fastened the ring of my leg, and soon found one to fit it.

"How shall I describe the sensation I felt on this first taste of liberty. The generous youth then dressed me himself in the turkish garb, bound his own turban round my head, gave me

his

his cimeter, and a purse of gold, and kindly pressing my hand, added, 'Christian, tell the generous Spaniard, brave Muley's son-in-law, that we Moors are alive to the sentiments of gratitude and honour. My poor father, stung to the soul by the massacre of his kindred, is grown insensible to pity for their murderers; and, forgetting that all alike are not guilty, he condemns them alike to suffer.'

"Then quitting the apartment, he led me through the private gallery and his own apartment, into the gardens; and, opening a small door, directed me the way I was to pursue. Throwing myself at my deliverer's feet, I pressed his hand to my heart, as the tears rolled down my cheek: then rising, I hastily left a place which had been the scene of so much misery to me."

"Noble minded Osmin!" exclaimed Alfonso and Raimond together, "how I long to embrace thee!"

Valdenza wiped a tear away that rose in his eye, while the pious monk raising his hands to heaven, said, "Never! no never, shall the virtuous deed go unrewarded."

I jour-

" I journeyed on," continued Sebastian, after a long pause, " keeping always as near the coast as possible, in the hope of meeting a vessel in which I might embark. During the first two days I scarcely stopped, trembling lest my savage task-master should pursue me, though the kind youth had promised to prevent all search being made. My dress, and knowledge of the language, which I had learned on first attending donna Zamira, and now easily recovered by daily hearing it spoken, enabled me to pass without much observation.

" I was so fortunate as to obtain a passage in a vessel bound to Malta, where changing my Moorish for a Maltese dress, I took advantage of the first favourable opportunity to embark for Sicily, and after a few hours sail arrived in that island.

" Blessing heaven for such unexpected protection, and thinking all danger past, I cheerfully pursued my way, taking a guide to conduct me through a country, I had never seen before. Several days passed without any remarkable occurrence; when one evening we were surprised by three robbers, near a wood

we

we had just quitted, who beating after stripping me, left me nearly expiring under the blows I had received.

"My guide, who had fled on the first alarm, now returned, and conveyed me to a cottage at no great distance: here I rested two days, and once more pursued my way.

"At length I arrived near the spot my master had described, and easily found the residence I was in search of. Alas! the tidings I learned filled my mind with sorrow. A poor fisherman, who said he had been greatly relieved by a sum of money given him by my lord, invited me to his house, and afforded me all the comforts his scanty circumstances would allow. After resting two days I wandered on to the old castle, but could hear no account of them. I had the good fortune then to be received on board a vessel, which safely landed me here, and to-morrow I should have proceeded on my journey."

"Then you have not seen your son?"

"I have not, my lord—I suppose he is still at college."

"N

" No, my friend, I am informed from good authority, that having learned tidings of your captivity, he is gone to effect your delivery."

This event produced a very flattering account of the young man from the lips of the baron, and prevented the worthy Sebastian from dwelling on the perilous nature of his undertaking. At a very late hour the friends agreed to separate, and endeavour to take a short interval of repose, to enable them the better to support the affecting meeting they anticipated with signora di Toranci.

END OF VOLUME THE THIRD.

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